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MEMORIALS

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

MILBORNE PORT.

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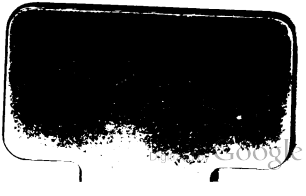

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MEMORIALS

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

OR,

"Old Independent Meeting House,"

MILBORNE PORT.

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MEMORIALS

OF THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

OR,

"Old Independent Meeting House,"

MILBORNE PORT.

BY

MRS. E. R. PITMAN,

AUTHORESS OF "HEROINES OF THE MISSION FIELD;" "MISSION LIFE IN GREECE AND PALESTINE;" "VESTINA'S MARTYRDOM;" "CENTRAL AFRICA, JAPAN, AND FIJI," ETC., ETC.

All profits to be devoted to the Renovation Fund.

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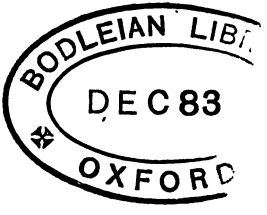

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS work has been a long "labour of love." Ten years ago the writer commenced collecting these "Memorials," and since then no opportunity of gaining information has been allowed to pass unimproved. Her best thanks are due to those friends who have assisted her by lending old records bearing on the subject; notably to Rev. E. H. Perkins, who lent a MS. compiled by a Mr. Simon King, and to the late Samuel Newton Parsons, Esq., who allowed her to make extracts from an old church book in his possession, and indicated the existence of information in other quarters. Other authorities have been consulted, such as "Fletcher's History of Independency," Dr. Calamy's "Nonconformist Memorial," and a valuable old MS. "History of the Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist Churches in England

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and Wales," compiled by Mr. Walter Wilson, and now in the Dissenters' Library, London. This History gives much valuable information concerning a period of some eighty years, which otherwise would be unknown.

This work would have been issued sooner, but that a promise was given to Mr. Parsons that it should not be published in his lifetime. Now he has passed away, and as a large outlay is being made by the Church (of nearly £300 in the total) for renovations and improvements in the chapel, the time appears to have come for the completion of this history. The writer's work is entirely gratuitous; after paying for the cost of publication for this edition (500 copies), the entire surplus will go into the Church's treasury, to assist in the payment of the debt. It is sufficient privilege for her to serve God's cause in this way, and to gain the commendation and praise of Him who has promised that "a cup of cold water" given in His Name shall "in no wise lose its reward."

E. R. PITMAN.

MILBORNE PORT
November, 1882.

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MEMORIALS.

CHAPTER I.

CHRONICLES OF MILBORNE PORT.

MILBORNE Port is an ancient borough, situated on the borders of Somerset and Dorset, in the midst of the Blackmore Vale. It is an old-fashioned, picturesque town, now somewhat decayed, but still retaining relics of its former importance. It is watered by a rivulet rising at Bradley Head, near Milborne Wick, a little hamlet north-west of the town, which rivulet runs into the Parret, and is known as the Ivel or Yeo. The name of the town is derived from the Saxon word *bourn*, "a stream," and *mylen*, "a mill," thus signifying the connection of the river with the mills. The word *port* is said to signify "a town," so that in our old Saxon etymology the literal meaning of the name would be "Mill-stream Town." Or, according to other authorities, the word is derived from *porta*, "a gate." The "Domesday Book," compiled in the reign of William the Conqueror, states that there

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were six mills within the precincts of the town. Its population in 1801 was 953; in 1861, 1813; in 1871, 2033; and in 1881, 1877. The town is almost wholly the property of Sir William Medlycott, Bart., of Ven, whose house is situated in the midst of beautiful pleasure grounds and park-like scenery at the south-east of the place. The family of Sir William de Milborn, which flourished in the reign of Edward III., derived its title from the town.

The town is situated in the very heart of an agricultural district, and agricultural pursuits furnish employment to many of the inhabitants. It has, however, been a manufacturing town from the middle of last century. Before the trade finally settled at Leicester and Nottingham, stocking-weaving was one of the staple manufactures. When this trade ceased to flourish, linen weaving took its place, and for a long period was a source of industry and emolument. The articles manufactured were principally the coarser kinds of linen, such as "dowlas," ticks, sail-cloths, rick-cloths, and coarse linen sheeting; the real fine "Irish" being made in Belfast and other places in Ireland, as now. But about the commencement of the present century, the leather glove trade was introduced by a gentleman named Henning. He was succeeded by a Mr. Taylor, who came from the neighbour-

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hood of Stoke-sub-Hamdon; and this branch of industry gradually supplanted the linen-weaving, until the latter manufacture died out. At the present date there is not a loom used in the town; and the writer can remember looking upon one or two looms, which still existed in her childhood, as relics of the old-time industry. Most of the weavers are now gathered to their fathers, while their descendants have learnt various branches of the art of glove-making. Messrs. Edward Ensor, Woolmington, and Thos. Ensor, were among the first Milborne Port glove manufacturers; and these have been followed by Messrs. Ensor & Sons, Pitman, Dyke, and Minchinton. In 1834, about 25,000 dozen of gloves were produced annually; but since that date, nearly or quite 100,000 dozen have been produced within a year. By persevering effort on the part of the manufacturers, the gloves produced are very nearly equal to those made by French glovers; and what has been lacking for the dressing of skins in the climate and water, as compared with those of France, has been largely supplied by the superior skill and perseverance of the English.

This manufacture is now the staple support of the inhabitants of Milborne Port, as well as of hundreds of women in the surrounding villages. The industry is not, however, productive of many

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evils, such as are associated with other manufacturing towns. We have no smoky atmosphere, no tall shafts or grimy prison-like buildings, as in Manchester and Sheffield, to poison the air or obscure the light of heaven. Neither does the clatter of wooden clogs make the streets noisy, as the factory operatives pass to and fro to their employment. The women are not taken from their homes and children to labour in the factories; while there is nothing in the manufacture prejudicial to life. Being of a refined character, the industry induces a refinement in dress, taste in the home, and a quietness in demeanour among the workers. The white apron and little shawl tied over the head in place of a bonnet, as with the Lancashire factory girl, are never seen in Milborne Port; while the rough manners of the miner, and the dog-fighting of the Black Country are alike unknown. The consequence is, that a quiet air of respectability and refinement characterises any audience assembled in Milborne Port, while intellectual and religious pursuits are sought after by a large number. Were a census of the inhabitants to be taken each Sabbath, it would be found, that out of the 1800 or so at present included in the returns, quite 1200, old and young, would be at public worship. The surroundings of the town are picturesque: breezy uplands, gently

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undulating hills, woody shades, and ancient elms, diversifying the landscape; while above all stands the parish church, with its grey tower upreared like some old monk, "his feet on earth, his thoughts with God." The churchyard has, during recent years, been enlarged and beautified by Sir William Medlycott.

The trade or manufacture of glove-making is one of the most ancient and honourable in the British dominions. It is supposed that the Saxons first introduced the practice of making and wearing gloves. An old proverb says, "For a glove to be good, three nations must contribute to it: Spain must dress the leather, France must cut it, and England must sew it." Gloves are first mentioned in English history about the year 1462. Edward IV. patronised the trade, and granted the craft armorial bearings in 1464. Among the old customs connected with gloves may be mentioned the following:—Holding lands by the tenure of a glove; the Champion of England, at the coronation, throws down his gauntlet, or glove, with a challenge to all the king's enemies; the presentation of a glove in the coronation ceremony of the sovereigns of England by the Duke of Norfolk; in former times challenges to duels between private individuals were made by means of the glove; gloves were presented to royal and distinguished

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persons at different seasons of the year; while at the present day, a pair of white gloves are presented to a judge upon the occasion of a maiden assize; kings were formerly buried with gloves on their hands; while, to this day, in some old churches and cathedrals, may be seen the gloves of princes and warriors suspended over their tombs. The glovers of Perth were incorporated in the year 1396; the glovers of London in 1638, by Charles I., under the style of "The Master Wardens and Fellowship of the Worshipful Company of Glovers of the City of London;" and the glovers of Worcester, under the name of "The Glovers' Company," in 1661.

It will be seen that this manufacture is a very important one to the district in which Milborne Port is situated, although agricultural pursuits furnish employment to many men and lads. For a long period, the place was a market town; but the Market House was used for a Town Hall and school room upon the abolition of the market, and is now utilised as a Museum of Natural History, collected and arranged by W. C. P. Medlycott, Esq.

Milborne Port is one of the most ancient boroughs in England, having returned two members to Parliament in 1307, now five hundred and seventy-six years since; but as it was the custom for electors in those days to

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maintain their representatives during the sitting of parliament, we are told that the voters petitioned to be excused from sending any. The town was thus virtually disfranchised until 1640, when Charles I. restored the privilege, and two members were again returned. This representation continued until 1832, when the town was disfranchised by the Reform Bill, on account of its small population. It was time for reform, seeing that while "pocket boroughs" were more than amply represented in Parliament, large and increasing towns, like Manchester and Birmingham, had no representatives. At the time of the town's disfranchisement, Lord Graves and Berkly Paget, Esq., were the two members of Parliament—supposed to represent the opinions and wishes of the "free and independent burgesses" who sent them thither.

Milborne Port is somewhat rich in ancient relics. In the centre of the town stands the remains of an ancient cross, the shaft of which is gone, but the base, consisting of three huge circular platforms, still remains. The Guildhall has a Norman archway in excellent preservation. Many old houses were formerly scattered about the town; and some two or three which still remain seem, by their projecting corners in the upper stories, to belong to the Elizabethan era; while others, possessing plain stone archways in

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place of wooden lintels and door-posts, probably belong to a still older date. One or two such stone archways have disappeared in the High Street to make room for new houses. Upon the chimney of one of these old houses might have been seen an ancient sun-dial; fortunately it was preserved, and built into the chimney of the Bank, where it still stands, facing the street. The church, dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, is an ancient edifice, erected in the cruciform style, with a square tower. A large portion of the building belongs to the Anglo-Norman era, and the south doorway presents a fine specimen of ancient toothed Norman moulding.

This church has been partially restored at different times. On the oak screen, separating the chancel from the communion, is the text, "Where the word of a king is, there is power, and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" This text is said to have been added in 1660, after the restoration of Charles II. In 1842, the south transept was rebuilt; in 1846, the tower was restored, and two new bells added, to complete the peal of eight. In 1855, the churchyard was enlarged by the grant of half an acre of land, given by Sir William Medlycott. In 1869, the nave and aisle were restored at a cost of about £3,000. The Rev. Hubert B. Medlycott is the present Vicar of the parish.

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The name of one part of the town, Kingsbury *Regis*, and the old institution of "Court-leet," point to its connection with Saxon times. There is a mound near the railway station, supposed to be an old Roman barrow; and upon this mound, tradition says that Richard Baxter stood and preached to Cromwell's troops, when engaged in the struggle with the Royalists. It is also said that this town was strongly in favour of Cromwell, and aided him and his men by affording food and shelter to his soldiers. One of the soldiers, however, in a drunken fit, carried off the Bible from the church,—which Bible was in those days chained to the desk for safety—and this circumstance so exasperated the inhabitants of the town, that they rose *en masse* against the troops. Weapons and cannon-balls have been dug up in various parts of the town at different dates, and it is supposed that these were relics of the civil wars. The old Roman road from Exeter to London runs straight through the town. During the past forty years, this road has been slightly altered for about a mile; instead of running in the old track, through the east end of the town, and on to Henstridge, it was carried aside, so as to pass Ven House, and through a new cutting, called Toomer Hill, when it rejoins the old road. More than once skeletons have been found

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beside this "Old Road," when ditches have been uncovered or drains have been made; and ugly stories of the "good old times," when highwaymen levied black-mail upon travellers, have been brought to mind. Ever since the time of the Romans, traffic has gone to and fro upon this great western highway. Lollards, Wycliffites, chapmen, pedlars, pack-horses, road-waggons, and stage-coaches, have successively traversed this road during the many hundreds of years which have passed by since it was first constructed. But gradually these relics of the olden time have given place to new inventions. The London and South Western Railway passes by the town, having been opened in 1860; and the rush and roar of the locomotive is now heard in place of the pack-horse's monotonous tramp and the road-waggon's slow and steady rumble. Gas has also been introduced, probably to give way in its turn to electric lighting. A branch of Stuckey's Banking Company has been established, and modern habits of thought and life are supplanting the old-world simplicity of our forefathers. A ball court was given in 1847, by Sir William Medlycott, for the recreation of the youthful population; while he has provided for their mental culture by erecting parochial school-rooms. These are built in the Gothic style, and form a great ornament to the place.

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The Wesleyan Chapel, of which we shall speak more fully in another chapter, is a beautiful specimen of modern ecclesiastical architecture. It was erected in the year 1865.

Among distinguished residents, Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe may be named. She is said to have resided in a large old house, formerly inhabited by the ejected vicar, and which stood in Church Street, opposite the Chapel Lane. This house possessed rooms with carved oak ceilings, quaint windows, and stone archways. It was said to be connected with monkish times, but we cannot quote authority for that statement. Mrs. Rowe, however, lived in it at one time, and was there visited by Dr. Isaac Watts, who proposed marriage to the lady. For some reason or other she refused the poet's offer, and remained firm to that decision, afterwards marrying Mr. Thomas Rowe. She is known chiefly by a little volume of devotional meditations, entitled "Devout Exercises of the Heart," which volume was revised and published, by request, after the writer's death. Dr. Watts says that she often wished and prayed for sudden death; and in this particular she obtained her request; for after retiring to her room in her usual health, one evening in February 1737, she very quietly passed into eternity. A book of devotion was lying upon the table by her side, and some loose

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papers, upon one of which she had written the following lines:—

"Oh! guide, and counsel, and protect my soul from sin,
Oh speak, and let me know Thy heavenly will,—
Speak evidently to my listening soul;
Oh, fill me with Thy light and love and peace,
And whisper heavenly comfort to my soul;
Oh speak, Celestial Spirit, in the strain
Of love and heavenly pleasure to my soul!"

Mrs. Rowe died, in the sixty-second year of her age, at Frome, whither she had retired. She was born at Ilchester in 1674, but resided during some of the years of her youthful and middle life at Milborne Port. Toplady, writer of the well-known hymn, "Rock of Ages," commenting upon the manner of Mrs. Rowe's death, writes as follows:—"Dost thou ask, O converted reader, which is best—To be snatched to heaven in a moment or two, or to be thrown on a lingering bed, and so, if the Lord please, be able to bear some testimony to His love, power, and faithfulness? I answer, Leave the whole matter to Him. If possible, do not entertain a wish one way or the other. Be this your petition,—

"'O receive my soul to Thee,
The manner and the time be Thine.'"

Another distinguished resident was the Rev. Thomas Charles, afterwards of Bala, one of the founders of the British and Foreign Bible

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Society. In September 1778, Mr. Charles was appointed to a curacy in Somersetshire; but after living there some fifteen months, his salary was reduced from £45 to £30 per annum. In the midst of his trouble on account of his straitened circumstances, the Rev. Mr. Lucas, who seems to have been the vicar of Milborne Port, kindly stepped forward and offered him a home. Writing to a friend at this date, Mr. Charles says, "When the time came that I was to determine one way or another, Mr. Lucas, in order to enable me to stay, very generously proposed to contribute toward my support. Next Lady Day I am to go and live at Milborne Port, as a kind of assistant to him (although he wants no assistance at present), and he promises to furnish me with a horse to serve my curacy, which is eight miles off. After all, I am in hopes that the whole will end well, if I have but patience to wait the Lord's good time. I know of nothing that could be more agreeable to me, and, by the blessing of Heaven, be more beneficial to me, than to spend a few years with a person of Mr Lucas' good sense, learning, and piety. I spend a great part of my time with him now, and the more I know of him, the more I like him."

Among the old traditions of the town is one which speaks of a visit paid by Dick Turpin, the

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noted highwayman. It was said that he put up at the house in Sherborne Street, now inhabited by Mr. W. Collard, which house was then an inn, known by the sign of the "Red Lion." This tradition says that Turpin slept at the "Red Lion" for one night. Bampfield Moore Carew, known as "the king of the gipsies," also frequented this neighbourhood at various times.

During the last century a workhouse flourished in Milborne Port. Indeed it survived until the passing of the new Poor Law Act. It was situated near the small river which flows through the town, and sheltered the decrepid and homeless poor of the parish. A story is preserved relating to the sudden death of one of the inmates under dreadful circumstances. It seems to be well authenticated, and may be met with in some collections of anecdotes. One of the female inmates stole a garment belonging to another person residing in the house. Search was made for it, and suspicion fell upon her; but on being charged with the theft, she denied it vehemently. Not satisfied with a simple assertion of innocence, she called upon God to "strike her blind, deaf, and dumb" if she had really taken the garment. She was then in her usual health, but very speedily she lost sight, then hearing, then speech, and within a few hours passed away. After her death the mis-

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sing property was found wrapped around her body.

While turning up the ground for the London and South-Western Railway at some cross-roads near Milborne Port, a skeleton of a woman was found. Old residents remembered the incident of "The Suicide's Grave," and recounted how, early in the present century, when it was customary to bury suicides at cross-roads, a young woman poisoned herself in consequence of a disastrous love affair, and was buried at this lonely spot without either bell or prayer. After the clods were heaped on the body, a long pointed stake was driven down, so as to be fixed in the breast of the corpse. Curious to say, a portion of this pointed stake was discovered with the skeleton.

The ecclesiastical chronicles of Milborne Port would be very incomplete without some notice of the clergymen and ministers who have gone out from other bodies of Christians in the town. With one exception, they are still labouring in the Gospel in different parts of the country. Their names are here subjoined :—

1. Rev. John Abbott, Rector, Canon, and Bishop's chaplain, The Cathedral, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Died, 1881.

2. Rev. Frederick Thorne, at present Rector of Bridgeham, East Harling, Norfolk.

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3. Rev. Thomas Luffman, at present Rector of Mansfield, Nottingham.

4. Rev. Samuel Luffman, curate at Brackley, near Oxford.

5. Rev. Edwin Genge, minister of Methodist Episcopal Church, Green Island, New York, U.S. America.

6. Rev. Wesley Genge, Wesleyan Methodist Minister, West Bromwich.

7. Rev. William Chant, Wesleyan Methodist Minister, Wadebridge, Cornwall.

8. Rev. William Weare, Wesleyan Methodist Minister, Leighton Buzzard.

9. Rev. Charles Clarke, Unitarian Minister at Birmingham.

Mr. Clarke cannot strictly be said to have left any Church in the town for the purpose of entering the ministry. But as he is a native, the list would be incomplete without him.

10. Mr. Sylvanus Dyke, formerly connected with the Wesleyan Church, is now labouring in connection with the London City Mission.

The names of six young men who have left the Congregational Church for the ministry of the Gospel will be found in another chapter.

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CHAPTER II.

SKETCH OF THE RISE, PRINCIPLES, AND PROGRESS OF NONCONFORMITY.

NONCONFORMITY may be said to have arisen in the reigns of Mary and her strong-willed sister, Elizabeth. Mary, known as the "Bloody Queen," used every means to undo the Reformation, commenced by her father, Henry VIII., and carried on by her brother, Edward VI. She yearned to re-establish the Roman Catholic religion in England, and to this end burnt at the stake one archbishop, three bishops, numbers of clergymen, and hundreds of men, women, and children, who would not surrender their Protestant faith. Bibles were burnt; thousands of people lingered in prison, suffering tortures of various kinds; and more than a thousand clergymen were driven from their pulpits, in England and Wales, because they refused to go back to Romanism. Many of these fled to the Continent, and took refuge there, until it became safe to return to

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England. While on the Continent, and in contact with the German Reformers, they learnt the principles of Protestantism more fully, and began to seek *a purer form of worship*. And when they returned to England, in Elizabeth's reign, teaching these principles, they became known as *Puritans*. These were the first Nonconformists.

Elizabeth succeeded her sister Mary, and took up the work of the Reformation; but being an imperious, haughty woman, she carried out her reforms with a high hand and much tyranny towards all those who differed from her. The Protestants who had fled to the Continent, returned to England, and became re-united to the English Church. But in a few years demands were made upon them with which they refused to comply. They were required to acknowledge and agree to—(1) The authority of the Queen as Supreme Head of the Church; (2) The use of the surplice; (3) The sign of the cross in baptism; (4) The use of the partially reformed Liturgy; (5) The adornment of the churches with pictures and statues; (6) The government of the Church by bishops. An "Act of Conformity" was passed in this reign, which inflicted heavy penalties upon all who refused or neglected to worship in the Established Church. Those who refused to

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conform to this law, were then called "*Nonconformists.*"

One Robert Browne, a clergyman of good family, had, in Elizabeth's reign, founded a church at Norwich upon Independent principles. This is stated to have been the *first* Independent church formed in England after the Reformation; hence, for many years, his followers were called "Brownists."

Upon the accession of James I., the great body of Nonconformists were divided into three great parties, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, according to their different views of Church government and doctrine.

During the reign of James I., a large emigration of Puritan Nonconformists took place to America. In November 1620, a number of them, known to history as "The Pilgrim Fathers," landed on a barren rock on the American coast, which they named New Plymouth, and laid the foundation of the New England States.

Charles II. succeeded at the Restoration, and during his reign the famous "Act of Uniformity" was passed, which ejected all clergymen from their livings who did not conform to the new regulations by August 24th, 1662. Obeying their consciences rather than the Act, 2,257 clergymen resigned their livings. Among this

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number was the Rev. William Hopkins, Vicar of Milborne Port, the founder of the Independent church in this town. Not only was this church formed, but in a large number of the cities and towns of England the same course was followed, and the ejected ministers formed Nonconformist churches out of the members of their old flocks.

But in order to stop the ejected ministers from forming such churches, various other Acts of Parliament were passed, designed to silence them. Among these were the "Conventicle Act," which made it a crime, punishable by fine, imprisonment, or transportation, to attend any cottage-meeting; the "Five Mile Act," which forbade all the Nonconformist ministers to reside within five miles of any market town, or of any place where they had formerly preached; the "Corporation Act," and the "Test Act," which forbade Nonconformists to hold any office, civil or political, or to officiate as schoolmasters, except they conformed to the Established Church.

The suffering under these Acts was terrible. Macaulay says, speaking of the condition of the Nonconformists under the last two Stuarts, "Never was the condition of the Puritans so deplorable as at that time. Never had spies been so active in detecting congregations. It

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was impossible for the sectaries to pray together without precautions, such as are employed by coiners and receivers of stolen goods. The places of meeting were frequently changed; worship was performed, sometimes at break of day, and sometimes at dead of night. Round the building where the little flock was gathered together, sentinels were posted to give the alarm if a stranger were near. No psalm was sung; and in some houses were trap-doors, through which, in case of danger, the minister might descend. Some divines of great fame were in prison: among these were Richard Baxter and John Bunyan. Others lost heart, and quitted the kingdom; among these was John Howe."

It is only fair to say that some of these oppressive laws were framed against Roman Catholics; but as they operated against *all* who dissented from the Established Church, they necessarily affected Nonconformists of every class. It must be remembered that the nation had only just escaped from the clutches of Popery. It dreaded the stake, the dungeon, and the Inquisition; and to prevent any possibility of the land ever becoming Romanized again, it established the Episcopalian Church as *the Church of these realms*. This Church was a *Reformed* Church, taken out of the Roman Catholic Church; but the Puritan Nonconfor-

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mists asserted that the Reformation *did not go far enough.* They pleaded for a complete shaking off of the ceremonial of Rome, and a return to the simplicity of worship as observed in the Apostolic Churches. Not being able to secure this in the Episcopalian Church, they founded churches according to this idea. Hence arose many of the Nonconformist Churches.

William III. succeeded to the throne in 1688, and in May 24th, 1689, the famous "Act of Toleration" was passed. This Act has been called the "Magna Charta" of the Dissenters' liberties. It provided protection for all who had come under the penal laws on account of religious opinions; gave freedom to all to worship God in their own way, except Unitarians and Roman Catholics, and allowed Dissenters to have their places of worship registered and licensed by law.

Since then, the "Corporation," and the "Test" Acts have been repealed; while the "Registration Act" of 1837 permitted the Nonconformists to solemnise marriages in their chapels. In 1871, the "Universities' Tests Abolition Act" came into force, and the Universities of the kingdom were thrown open to all Her Majesty's subjects, without the test of conformity to the Established Church. As the result of these measures, the political, civil, and ecclesiastical disabilities of Dissenters have been removed, so that they

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may now fill any offices in the Parliament or magistracy of the country.

This short sketch of the rise of Nonconformity in England was necessary in order to make this little history complete. Obviously, the barest outlines only have been given; still, enough has been said to give each reader a slight acquaintance with the reasons for the existence of Nonconforming Churches.

The term "*Dissenters*" is the general name for all the Protestant religious sects in this country which disagree with, or dissent from, the doctrine, discipline, or mode of worship in the Episcopal or Established Church. Jews and Roman Catholics are not termed "Dissenters," because they are not among the *Protestant* sects. The Episcopalian Church is the Established Church of England, and all Protestants who dissent from it are called "Dissenters." The Presbyterian Church is the Established Church of Scotland, and all who dissent from Presbyterianism in the sister kingdom are dissenters; while Presbyterians themselves, although belonging to the *Established* Church in Scotland, are Dissenters in England.

The leading bodies of Dissenters in England are—Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and the different branches of Methodists. Minor sects may be considered as subdivisions or off-

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shoots of the larger bodies. Dean Stanley, not long before his death, styled these dissenters, "*Nonconforming Churchmen.*"

Independents claim to be distinguished from all other bodies of Dissenters by their principles of Church order and government. Baptists alone are allied to them in these principles, although they differ from Independents in their views upon, and administration of, the rite of baptism. The leading principles of Independency are: 1st, That each soul, in religious matters, is answerable only to God; 2nd, That every *local* church of Christians meeting together, is independent of all human authority; 3rd, That the churches of Christ, in their aggregate character, are independent of all State connection and control. The term *Independent* is thus explained; while the modern term, *Congregationalist*, indicates that the sphere of each church's governing power is restricted to the congregation in which it exists. Macaulay said very truthfully and forcibly, when writing of Independents, "They conceived that every Christian congregation had, under Christ, supreme jurisdiction in things spiritual." It is still believed and carried into practice.

It is claimed by Independents that their leading principles are as old as the Apostolic Churches. They believe that, wherever the

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Apostles preached they founded churches, and ordained elders in every church (see Acts xiv. 23); and that the officers in the primitive churches were confined to bishops, or presbyters, or elders, and deacons. The first of these offices related entirely to the spiritual leadership of the churches, and the second to the management of the secular affairs. In these points, they claim to follow the pattern and practice of the early Christian churches, before they were amalgamated into one universal, or Catholic, Church, under the control and government of popes, and bishops, and councils. Only two orders of officers are known in an Independent church: the bishops, or ministers, whose work it is to attend to the spiritual affairs of the people; and the deacons, whose work it is to manage, and provide for, the secular and financial matters connected with the support of the ministry, and the carrying on of divine worship.

In 1831, the Independent churches were formed into a "Congregational Union of England and Wales." This Union, however, is only an advisory body, and not a governing one. The churches are not governed by this Union, in the same sense that the Methodist churches are governed by their Conferences.

Baptist and Independent churches are now

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the only ones which claim to elect their own officers, and manage their own affairs, without outside interference or direction. In some respects, the practice is good; in others, the practice is much below the excellence of the theory. The "Declaration of Faith and Order," adopted by this Union, and accepted by the churches, will be found in the Appendix.

During 1881, a Jubilee Fund was raised, to commemorate the jubilee of the Union. This fund has reached a total of nearly £200,000, and will be applied to the extinction of chapel debts, and erection of new places of worship, as well as to the increase of ministerial stipends among the denomination. R. S. Hudson, Esq., of Chester, started the fund with a donation of £20,000, and Samuel Morley, Messrs. Spicer, and other gentlemen, followed with contributions of £5,000 each.

In 1882, this Congregational Union had fifty associations in England and Wales, with 4138 churches, and 2739 ministers and evangelists. There are also 141 ministers in Scotland and Ireland, with 259 churches. The total number of Congregational churches in the United Kingdom, the Colonies, and mission fields, is 4986, with 3746 ministers.

In the United States, the Independents are very numerous and influential. They have at

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the present time 3720 churches, with about 3705 ministers, and 386,891 members. The adherents would number about four times this estimate.

In the present day, the bonds of union between the Established Church and Dissenters are being drawn closer. It is being discovered and understood, that if there be oneness in Christ, there cannot be antagonism or enmity in practice. As it was remarked a few weeks since, at the Church Congress,—"Nonconformity gave us Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and Baxter's 'Saints' Rest.'" It is recognised that one may worship God in the plain, extempore fashion of Nonconformists, and yet be as truly Christian as if preferring a more ornate service and using a liturgy. Indeed, in many dissenting places, a modified liturgy has been adopted, as being helpful to devotion. Thus, in practice and worship, the *unity* of Christians in the common faith is being more and more exemplified.

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CHAPTER III.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

1662—1742.

Reign of Charles II.
„ James II.
„ William III.
„ Anne.
„ George I.
„ George II.

THE Congregational or Independent Church was first founded by the Rev. William Hopkins, Vicar of Milborne Port, in 1662. At the time of the Ejection, he, with over 2,000 other clergymen of the Church of England, went forth, leaving their livings for the sake of conscience. He was born at Yeovilton in 1629, and held the vicarage of this parish from 1656 till 1662. Mr. Hopkins laboured with much diligence and fervour among his parishioners, not unfrequently meeting with persecution in the discharge of his duties.

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Among many prevailing customs, he opposed the ringing of the bells upon the Sabbath; and this so enraged one of the ringers, that he vowed he would kill Mr. Hopkins. It is said that the murderer placed himself behind a hedge, and awaited the vicar's coming; but, by some providential interposition, he was prevented passing that way. However, another person passed by in the darkness, and the assassin fired, killed the person, was tried, convicted, and hung for the murder. It much affected Mr. Hopkins that he should thus innocently be the means of shortening the lives of two unfortunate beings. Several attempts were made to eject him from his living previous to 1662; but in that year he quietly resigned at the passing of the Act of Uniformity, and became for some time a hearer in the place where he was accustomed to officiate. After a time, being followed by many of his congregation, who loved him, he preached to them in his own house as he had opportunity, as well as at other places. His wife was niece to Bishop Mew, and if he could have conformed, he had considerable offers of preferment. He opened a school at Milborne Port, in order to support himself; but as by this school he transgressed against the Act of Charles II., which provided that every schoolmaster, or teacher of youth, should conform to the Church of England, he

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was cited before the Bishop's Court, and compelled to cease his scholastic labours. He was also excommunicated for the crime of teaching without permission, till King James' proclamation of pardon to excommunicated persons, in 1687, known as "The Declaration of Indulgence." Upon the accession of William III., further liberty was accorded to dissenters. On the 24th May, 1689, the "Act of Toleration" was passed for the purpose of exempting Protestant dissenters from the penalties of certain laws, and Mr. Hopkins participated in its benefit. "After this liberty he preached at Wincanton and some other places, where he was much beloved. He was a humble, cheerful, courteous man, who delighted in doing good. He was much of Richard Baxter's judgment in controversial matters, but had great respect for all good men. He was contented with his condition and mortified to the world. He was the same in all changes; one of the primitive stamp, of a plain, honest, sincere heart, and an unblamable life. He died in March 1700, in his seventieth year."

Of this ministry some interesting accounts are preserved. Mr. Hopkins occupied the old house referred to in a former chapter, as forming part of a conventual establishment, situated in the Church Street; and here he preached to the

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little congregation who followed him, until the "Conventicle Act" exposed him and his hearers to much persecution. This Act was intended to operate against private meetings, and ran as follows:—"Every person above sixteen years of age present at any meeting, under pretence of any exercise of religion, in any other manner than the practice of the Church of England, where there are five persons more than the household, shall for the first offence, by the justice of the peace be recorded, and sent to gaol for three months, till he pay £5; and for the second offence, six months, till he pay £10; and the third time, being convicted by a jury, shall be banished to some of the American plantations." Informers dogged the footsteps of ejected ministers, and watched those friends supposed to be faithful to them. On this account it became very difficult to secure uninterrupted meetings, and the little band was compelled to have recourse to stratagem, to worship according to the dictates of conscience. One day, a service was being held in Mr. Hopkins' house, when an informer came, stealthily spying round, and listening for any sounds of worship. A friend stepped up to the man, and said, pointing to the south-east end of the town, "There they are, gone off down on Pleck." The informer went towards Pleck, while the friend quietly stepped in and

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gave the worshippers the hint, so as to prevent them from being arrested. It is said that they finished the service in peace. An old ash tree was till recently standing in a field midway between Henstridge and Milborne Port, while a third parish bordered the same field. Midnight services were held there by the early Nonconformists; and when the informers led the officers to the spot, the worshippers could escape into Dorset or Somerset as the case might be, so as to avoid arrest; seeing that the constabulary of one county or parish could not act in another. In this way the ash grew to be known as "Gospel Ash." A farm-house is now built near the spot.

Mr. Hopkins was succeeded by the Rev. John Sprint, who was the ejected rector of Portland. After his ejection, he preached first at Wimborne, then at Stalbridge, then at Sturminster. He removed to Milborne Port in 1700. He at first preached once a day in his own licensed house, and also once at Temple Combe, until each cause grew large enough to maintain a pastor. Mr. Sprint enjoyed the liberty accorded by the Toleration Act of William III., and was at liberty to preach either in his own house, or in a room, or "meeting-house," provided such buildings could be obtained, without fear of molestation. Soon after his settlement here, he licensed a room, belonging to one Mr. Hallet, and afterwards

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occupied by a Mr. Brett, a respectable hosier. It is stated that this room stood upon ground now in the occupation of the writer's family, as a garden. In later days, this room grew to be spoken of as "The Old Meeting House," and was licensed as a preaching-room under that name. By the assistance of some friends, it was fitted up in a decent manner as a place for public worship. This work was gradually carried on; the desk was first raised and fixed, and afterwards the pulpit. Mr. Sprint is said to have made it his constant practice to read and pray at the desk, and never ascended the pulpit but to preach. He had also some peculiarities, always wearing a cassock when he preached, and a rose in his hat. Although he had no invitation to the place, nor any prospect of supporting himself and family by preaching, yet he soon met with considerable encouragement, both from the inhabitants of the town and the adjacent villages. On his first coming, he had opened a grammar school for boys, as well as preached half-days at Temple Combe. His school was well filled by young gentlemen of rank and fortune. John Hoskyns, Esq., a firm friend of Mr. Sprint, gave the reverend gentleman a legal settlement in Stalbridge, by giving him the lease of a small estate there. Mr. Hoskyns was a gentleman of considerable means, at Purse Caundle, and the

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principal supporter of the dissenting cause at Milborne Port. The justices could have removed Mr. Sprint to Sturminster, by a special order, to get him out of the way, had it not been for Mr. Hoskyn's kindness. This gentleman died in 1714, and Mr. Sprint died in 1718, never having recovered from the sorrow occasioned by the loss of his friend. He was a minister of great learning, piety, and public spirit, and was mourned by a large circle of friends. He was also very good to the poor, insomuch that frequently he involved himself in straits and difficulties, but experienced many striking and seasonable interpositions of Divine Providence in his own favour, as signal returns for his charity. He took no regular salary from his people, because he had a flourishing school, and so was, in a manner, independent of a stipend; but it is recorded that the exercise of this liberality to his church rather injured them than otherwise, because they grew negligent of paying his successors properly. It is recorded that, in a funeral sermon preached by him in 1714, he offended Mrs. Rowe and Lady Chudleigh by some remarks on the inferiority of women, and was answered by both ladies in published productions.

It is recorded that Mr. Sprint preached a sermon at Milborne Port, in January 1714, on the accession of George I., which sermon "breathed a

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spirit of ardent loyalty and devout piety." It is a fact worthy of note, that the first two ministers of the church occupied their positions for the long period of fifty-eight years unitedly.

The name of "Edith Sprint" appears in the church book of 1744, as a member of it in that year. Later on, there is this record, "Mrs. Sprint died August 9th, 1761." This lady was evidently a descendant or relative of the Rev. John Sprint, who had passed away some forty-three years earlier.

After Mr. Sprint's death, the people remained for some time unsettled. About nine years passed thus, during which period they were ministered to by various preachers, viz., Mr. England, of Sherborne; Mr. Collins, of Temple-Combe; Mr. Elmes, of Wincanton; and Dr. James Foster, of Coleford.

Of Dr. Foster we learn some interesting particulars from the annals of another church. He was born at Exeter, in September 1697, and studied there at Mr. Hallett's academy. He was ordained in 1718, and filled his first pastorate at Milborne Port. He afterwards removed to take charge of two churches situated among the Mendip Hills; but the united salary only amounted to £15 per annum. He then became pastor of the church at Trowbridge; but as the salary was so poor, he thought of quitting the ministry, and

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actually intended learning the trade of a glover. He then became chaplain to Robert Houlton, Esq., at Farleigh Castle; but removing to London in 1724, he was chosen pastor of the Barbican Church. In 1744, he removed to Pinner's Hall church; and in 1746, attended the Earl of Kilmarnock on the scaffold. It will be remembered that this Earl, together with the Earl of Balmerino, suffered death on Tower Hill, by beheading, at this date, for participation in the rebellion of 1745, in favour of "Prince Charlie," the Pretender.

The next minister was the Rev. John Bulstrode, of Charlton Mackerell. He settled at Milborne Port in 1727, and continued here a little over three years. He then removed to Cerne Abbas, and shortly after died.

After his decease, the pulpit was supplied for a few years by two Baptist ministers, Revs. Samuel Fry, and Thomas Boscher. They were both believers in the peculiar notions held by the "Seventh Day Baptists" of that era, and kept holy the Saturday as well as Sunday in each week: but after residing at Milborne Port for some time, gave up these views. Mr. Fry then accepted the pastorate of the church at Horsely Down, London, while Mr. Boscher accepted the invitation of the church at Milborne Port. He continued sole pastor from 1734 till 1742.

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When he retired, the church numbered thirty members, having much increased in his time. He retired to Sherborne, where he was living in 1774, very old and infirm. The precise time of his death is not recorded.

According to the valuable manuscript work in Dr. Williams Dissenter's Library, London, before alluded to, "up to this time the congregation was considered to belong to the Presbyterian denomination; but upon the settlement of Mr. Young in 1743, the church was remodelled on the Independent plan, and a 'Church Covenant' introduced." Mr. Young, the next pastor, was inclined towards the Independent or Congregational form of church discipline and order, and persuaded the little church to follow him in adopting it. Of the "Covenant" then signed by the church, we shall treat more fully in the next chapter. This "Covenant" marks the era of change from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism. From this period, instead of being controlled by a Presbytery, the church become a self-governing body, accepting and carrying out the principle that each "congregation of faithful men" was sufficiently able to legislate for itself, yet according to the usual practices of Congregationalism.

Socially, as well as religiously, the condition of the people was very poor. The whole population of the country was not above five or six

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millions; while about one million of these were paupers. Labourers earned about five shillings weekly; those engaged in manufactures, six or seven. Children went to work as early as five or six years old; and the chief food of the poor was bread or cake made from barley, rye, and oats. Drunkenness was very common, but during the period of which this chapter treats, tea and coffee were introduced. In place of the old road waggon, "Flying coaches" began to be set going in different parts of the country, but highwaymen and footpads infested the roads. Education was almost unknown, except among the aristocracy; books were scarce and dear; newspapers were only occasionally printed, and then in single sheets, upon the occurrence of any great event. The doctrines of Free Trade were unknown; consequently many articles of diet, now used daily as necessaries, were then esteemed luxuries, and obtainable only by the very wealthy. Salt pits were not worked, and the only way in which this needful article could be obtained was by evaporating sea-water in long troughs or boxes. The lives of peasants were rude and comfortless; whipping posts and stocks were set up in every village; and if a poor man was found out of his district without a pass from the magistrates, he was taken and flogged, no matter on what business he was sent. The

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penal laws were severe beyond measure; nearly three hundred offences in the Statute Book were punishable with death. Some of these offences were trivial, such as robbing hen-roosts, writing threatening letters, or stealing property to the value of five shillings.

Bibles were scarce and dear; writing was almost an unknown art among the lower classes; and very few could read. The bulk of the people were steeped in ignorance and poverty, while corruption and bribery reigned among the officials of the Government. Macaulay says, "From the nobleman who held the white staff and the great seal, down to the humblest tide-waiter, what would now be called gross corruption was practised without disguise and without reproach. Tithes, places, commissions, and pardons, were daily sold in the market by the great dignitaries of the realm; and every clerk in every department imitated to the best of his power the evil example."

Such were the "good old times."

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CHAPTER IV.

EARLY ANNALS OF THE CHURCH.

CHANGE FROM PRESBYTERIANISM TO CONGREGATIONALISM.

1743—1805.

Reign of George II.
„ George III.

IN July 1744, the Rev. George Lewis Young succeeded to the pastorate, and soon after induced the church to become Congregational in its form of church order and discipline. The same old MS. book to which we have before referred, says, "All did not sign the Covenant, but all continued in the church membership." This MS. does not mention the Presbytery with which the Milborne Port church had been connected; probably the evidence on this point is yet to be discovered among the Presbyterian records.

This "Covenant" ran as follows:—"We

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whose names are hereto subscribed, believe that there is but one God, the Father of all, by whom are all things, and we by Him; whose power is great, whose authority is over all. We believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons, and the one only living and true God. That He has a right to all persons, things, and services. That this One God has created all things for His own glory, in which we are no less concerned. We believe that He is to be worshipped with pure and spiritual worship, which He has nowhere revealed but in His Word, which we profess to be, and take to us as a rule of faith and practice; and that all that is necessary to be known, believed, and done, is contained therein. We believe that it is the duty of all to know, worship, and fear Him; that He has not left it indifferent whether any will be subject to Him and obey His Word or not. And in His infinite wisdom and goodness, that He has appointed suitable means for the advancing of His glory and the bringing in and building up His people. That as it is the duty of all to love and serve God, and to give themselves up to Him to be ruled and saved by Him, so it is our duty particularly; and that each one for another, we give up ourselves to God, to be His, to be for Him, and for none other. We believe that Christ has

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appointed particular societies or Churches on earth, for His peculiar glory, and the good and salvation of His people, whom He has called by His grace out of the world; that they might have communion with their Lord and God, and fellowship with each other; that they might show forth His praises, walk in all His ordinances, and keep all His commandments; which are not to be done out of such communities, and which He has given special privileges and promises to, and wherein His presence peculiarly dwells. That to every particular church, Christ has given the power of binding and loosing, and carrying on the government among themselves.

"We therefore from a sense of duty, and desirous of Christ's glory, and our own salvation and edification, do now solemnly profess the Lord to be One God, and willingly and unreservedly give up ourselves to Him, and to each other, according to His will, as His church and people, to obey Him who is our Head, and to walk in all His commandments and ordinances; to observe all the institutions of His Word, particularly the preached word, sacraments, prayer, and thanksgiving. We profess love to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to each other, and desire to build up each other in our most holy faith, to watch over one another, and to submit

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to one another, in the Lord. These things we declare in the Name and strength of Christ."

This "Covenant" was signed at a solemn church meeting, by thirty-eight of the members, beside the pastor. The following are the names:—

George Lewis Young.
Ann Brett.
Thomas Granger.
Samuel Raymond.
Goddard Hallett.
William Granger.
Thomas Vowell.
George Grimes.
J. Bullen.
Mark Ridgeway.
John Thring.
Joseph Porter.
Henry White.
Deborah Barrett.
Eliz. Taylor.
Hannah Hide.
Sarah Raymond.
Melesson Jarvis.
Mary Chamberlain.
Sarah Brook.
James White.
Edith Sprint.
Eliz. Whitelock.
Margaret Donah.
Tamar Stephens.
Love Brett.
Sarah Raymond, Junr.
Mary Brett.
Mary Jarvis.
Mary Hallett.
Betty Thring.
Gray Whitelock.
Ann White.
Joan Hallett.
John Newton.
Jonathan Chant.
Mary Granger.
Sarah Newton.
Ann Dinham.

A note is appended as follows:—"In pursuance of giving themselves up to God in a church way, this was subscribed; the most did then subscribe, but all not being at that time present, did not then do it, but as soon as there was opportunity afterwards the most did it."

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From the old church book, which was commenced at this date, we extract the following entries:—

"Copy of Rev. Mr. Young's commendatory epistle to the Milborne Port church, from the church with which he was before connected.

"To the Church of Christ at Milborne Port. Whereas, Y^e^ Rev. G. L. Young, who has been a member with us for many years, and behaved worthy the Christian character, has desired his dismission from us to you, in order to his regular taking upon him the pastoral charge of you, we do hereby dismiss him from his relation to us, to you, with our earnest prayers to God, that you may be earnest blessings to each other, and that his valuable labours may be abundantly blessed, for the good of multitudes of souls. We wish you great increase of all grace and comfort. Signed, in the name of the Church meeting at Horsely Down, Southwark, London.

JOHN HALFORD, Pastor.

July, 1774. JOHN UNDERSHELL, Deacon."

From an old letter crumbling with age, we extract the following. It bears date, "Stalbridge, 23rd December, 1748," and concerns the dismission of a member of the Stalbridge Congregational Church to the Milborne Port Church. It is addressed as follows:—

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"To the Rev. George Lewis Young, of Milborne Port. Rev. Sir, Mrs. Lydia King, of Caundle, having signified by proxy a desire (for certain reasons) to separate from Christian communion with the Church of Christ at Stalbridge, and to join with that of Milborne Port. This is to certifie all whom it may concern, that the members of the Christian Society at Stalbridge, wishing Mrs. King soul-prosperity, leave her to act in this instance as she shall think proper.

"I am, Sir, yours in the best bonds,

"SIMON GRIMSTEED."

During Mr. Young's pastorate, the entrance into the church was by a particular confession of faith on the part of the candidates, and an explicit declaration of their experimental acquaintance with the power of religion upon their hearts, written out at full length, or dictated by themselves, in case they were incapable of writing. One beautifully-written letter appears among some old loose papers, penned during this ministry, and signed with the mark of Mary Granger. It runs as follows:—

"To the Church of Christ at Milborne Port, under the care of Mr. Young. As it is required, so I am willing, to lay before you my experience, according to the measure I have received, which I would do so with all humility and thankfulness.

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"I hope, with respect to my soul, that Christ has suffered and died for it; and this my hope I would not, and do not, dare to ground upon any worthiness in me—for truly I have none—but only in the free grace of God through Christ. I am well sensible that I am undone by nature, that Christ is the only Mediator, and there is no coming to the Father but by Him who is the way. I am convinced, I trust, by the Spirit, that as He only can, so He is willing to save to the uttermost, all that come to the Father. As He saves, so, seeing my need of salvation, and concerned about it, I would, and hope I do—as enabled by Him—look to Him to save me; to save me by His righteousness and mediation, and by the powerful, necessary work of His good Spirit in my heart. I would desire to look to Christ, to be saved by Him, as He has all righteousness and merit, but I would be alike desirous, seeing the necessity and duty of looking to Christ to strengthen me to duty, that I may live to Him, and walk in the way of His commandments. I am looking with hope that He will give me grace and understanding, that I may so walk. I hope He has called me by His grace, and made me His disciple, as I am made to see more my sinfulness by nature and practice; and do hate and abhor every false way; and do desire, and endeavour, by faith in

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Christ, to live in the mortification of sin, and perfect holiness in the fear of God. For which ends, even the good of my soul, both here and hereafter, I am desirous, as my indispensable duty, to attend upon, and make use of, all the ordinances of Christ's Word, and particularly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. I desire to partake of this ordinance because Christ has commanded it, and that my soul may be strengthened, and I may enjoy communion with Christ. He has said (John vi. 53): "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." The reason why I desire to join in with this church is, because I apprehend there is most regularity and order agreeable to the Word, together with the preaching and administration of the ordinances, and I have found the ministry of this place made useful to me. So that, as I hope this is the real state and desire of my soul, and that I shall be accepted of God, I also desire and hope to be received into church fellowship here, and that, as in all, so in me, and in this relation and state particularly, God may be glorified.

"The mark of X MARY GRANGER."

This letter is endorsed by one of the deacons: "Read the first time, April 4th, 1745. Read the second time, May 2nd, when she was admitted."

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One can fancy the ordeal which this definite and written declaration of faith imposed upon a young trembling Christian desirous of church fellowship. Only real piety would stand such a test; consequently, the church of those days was very pure, single-hearted, and loving.

As the room, or "Old Meeting House," in which the church had so long assembled for public worship was now become a little ruinous and otherwise inconvenient, a proposal was made to the church and congregation, in 1749, for building a new meeting house. In furtherance of this design, Mr. Simon Paine, a tanner, in concurrence with Mr. Medlycott, lord of the manor (ancestor of the present baronet), offered, and actually made them, a deed of gift of a convenient spot of ground. On referring to the old church records, we find the following extracts:—

"1749, August 21st. At a monthly church meeting, it was proposed and agreed to, if it could be done, to have a new meeting house, Mr. Simon Paine proposing to give the ground, his right in it, which was only for life. Mr. Medlycott was afterwards asked whether he would let the people have the land; which he agreed to do if he could. Afterwards it was found that he could."

This land was called the "Town Close," and

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the spot chosen is that still occupied by the chapel. Thomas Medlycott, Esq., generously made it a freehold, so as to prevent the possibility of the church losing their home when the lease held by Mr. Paine should expire. More than once in the annals of this church, we come across proofs of the liberality exhibited by the Medlycott family to these early Nonconformists.

"September 7th. At a church meeting, after consideration, the church agreed to have the ground of Simon Paine and Mr. Medlycott, and to build a meeting house, if the Lord prosper. Agreed to have the writings of conveyance of the land drawn up, and that they be paid for out of the church stock. Also, that a gathering be made towards the building."

From a memorandum in the church records, we find that the deeds then drawn up, "particularly expressed that the meeting house therein mentioned shall be for the use of 'Congregational Protestant Dissenters, commonly called *Independents*."

"1750, January 4th. Agreed that there be two doors and two windows in the front of the house, of a middling size, and stone be used instead of timber. Height, 15 feet; 28 feet square, in the clear; 32 feet from end to end, outside. Estimated cost, £128."

"March 1st. Agreed to begin the building

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this month. An account of subscriptions was laid."

"August 30th. At a monthly church meeting, Resolved that Tuesday night be set apart for humiliation and prayer, on account of the state of the church; and particularly that the building was in such a hurry, and determined and carried on without first asking God's direction and blessing."

"September 11th. As appointed, the day was kept by some." Here is another proof of the single-heartedness, sincerity, and deep desire for God's glory which animated these early Nonconformists. Eagerness to secure a chapel suitable for worship, had at first obscured the sense of their dependence upon God. But quickly the conscience of the church spoke out. A work undertaken without prayer could not prosper or be blessed; and a day of humiliation was appointed on account of the omission. What heart-searchings, and reverence, and solemnity of feeling are implied in this early record of our forefathers!

"November 1st. Agreed to have a vestry, with a fence wall, as far as the stones will go."

"November 29th. Agreed to make up the outer wall 5 feet high, to cope it with rough paviour, and put posts in for a gate, and to have a one-leaved pale-gate, 4½ feet wide."

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"1751, January 31st. Some pews were allotted to several. Agreed to have a table-pew six feet wide. Agreed to put up only the frame of a gallery, four feet deep."

But the sum of £128 was a great deal for a little church to raise in those days, and indeed it was found afterwards that the whole of the work would amount to £150 or £160. In these circumstances, a letter was sent to some of the neighbouring churches, asking their aid in the undertaking. It was entitled "The Case of the People at Milborne Port, in the County of Somerset, with regard to the Building a Meeting House, intended by them." It is quaintly but sensibly written, and runs thus,—"The place where we are is too straight and inconvenient, and in too decayed and dangerous a condition to be long occupied (and as the house is not our own, and in dispute between two persons, we cannot get it repaired, and we are likewise threatened to be turned out of it); and it hath pleased God to give us a good increase, so that there is a flourishing and growing interest.

"The present place hath been long occupied as a place of worship, and before was but a little old barn.

"We are, from the nature and condition of the place and circumstances before mentioned, under the necessity of building another, and a

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larger, but are not able to effect it of ourselves. Tho' we have a large congregation, they are generally poor, and 'tis but a small part that we can raise, though many have done to their utmost, or rather beyond their power.

"If we were now to desist, and it could not be accomplished, it would baulk and narrow, or confine the good and rising interest that is here, and would greatly gratify and open men's mouths that are enemies to religion and the interest of Christ among us. From this place it is hoped and believed religion may, and doth, spread among others in other places.

"A regard to the glory of God and the purity of His worship, our own benefit, and that of those that are rising up, are reasons that induce and prompt us to this undertaking. What we have raised, and are able to raise, will amount to no more than £60, and the estimate taken by experienced workmen, amounts to £150 or £160, for the building of a plain and convenient house.

"Wherefore, we humbly offer this to the consideration of the well-disposed, and earnestly request their concurrence and kind assistance,—scarce any people needing assistance more than we,—which will be thankfully acknowledged and received by us, and thereby praise redound to God.

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"From Milborne Port. Signed in the name of the whole church, Oct 7, 1749,

"GODDARD HALLETT
"WILLIAM GRANGER } Deacons."

A list of subscriptions is appended, which shows that friends arose and responded to the appeal. But still, in spite of utmost endeavours, the whole sum could not be raised, and in 1751, a second appeal was made to the neighbouring churches, in a paper entitled "The Case of the People of Milborne Port in the county of Somerset, with regard to their new meeting house now building." These letters served in the place of advertisements. Religious journals were scarcely known then, and the printing press was not made the use of which it is to-day, in philanthropic matters. The "Case" ran thus:—

"For various and necessary reasons, we judged it fit, and have begun to build a new meeting house, and to that end we have endeavoured, both amongst ourselves and others abroad, to get assistance, that we might be able to raise a larger and more convenient place for our meeting in, for the worship of God than that we are in.

"Of ourselves we were not able to effect the building; we have tried, and are still trying, amongst ourselves, to raise what we can towards

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it; but are in further need of applying for the contributions of friends.

"The house is in good part done, and the main part; but we have not wherewith to furnish it. There are wanting at least forty pounds, or upwards, to do what is necessary, in a convenient manner.

"Through mercy we had some encouragement, and have been enabled to go on so far as we have. If the work were to stop for want of more to carry it on, it would be a hurt to the interest, and would gratify and open their mouths that are enemies and opposed to the interest of Christ among us.

"Wherefore we humbly offer this to the consideration of the well-disposed, and earnestly request their concurrence and kind assistance in this great affair which we would thankfully acknowledge and receive; and may all redound to the glory of God.

"Signed in the name of the church,

"GODDARD HALLETT,
"JOHN THRING,
"AMOS HALLETT,
"JOHN NEWTON,
"JOHN KNYTE."

Mr. Young himself used active measures among his ministerial brethren, and more dis-

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tant churches, to raise funds towards this building. From a small diary written by him, we find that he corresponded with the Revs. Messrs. Wells of Wimborne, Reader of Weymouth, King of London, Newman of Bridgewater, Pitts of St. Albans, Webb of Hitchen, and many other friends in different towns, and to so good a purpose that he succeeded in gaining about £58 for the meeting house. From the same diary we find that the foundation stone of the building was quietly laid, by the masons, on March 26th, 1750. While the meeting house was building, however, Mr. Young left for Odiham, Hants, but very soon retired to his own estate at Nether Compton. He and his wife lie buried there.

The Rev. William Maurice, from Odiham, succeeded to the pastorate early in 1752, and opened the new meeting house in that year. He, however, remained here only about a twelvemonth, and returned to Odiham. The church must then have been served by supplies from neighbouring churches, or by students from the Academies, for we can find no proof of a settled pastor until August 1754, when the Rev. Francis Newton, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland, succeeded. At this date, the manuscript History to which we have before referred, says, "The number of communicants was twenty; the hearers

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of the congregation, two hundred. Many of the members belonged to Sherborne, and adjacent villages; but as a new meeting house was erected at Sherborne in 1757, this occasioned a sad decrease, both in the church and congregation."

Mr. Newton seems to have continued in the pastorate for more than thirty years, but for many of the latter years of his life he was infirm and unable to preach. Rev. Mr. Neeby (father of one of the members of the once flourishing firm of publishers of Paternoster Row, known as Sherwood, Neeby, and Jones) officiated for some time as assistant minister, during Mr. Newton's old age. The Rev. Mr. Taprell succeeded Mr. Neeby as assistant pastor, and, on the death of Mr. Newton, became the sole pastor. As a proof of the need that existed for younger and more vigorous pastoral oversight, we are told that in 1775 the congregation had diminished to eighty, and the church members to twelve. It is somewhat singular that Mr. Taprell resided in the vicarage house until about the year 1780. It is recorded that Mr. Newton died in 1785.

It will be remembered by readers of religious history, that this was the era of the Sunday School institution. Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, established Sunday Schools in 1780; but although doubtless the news of this novel agency of usefulness among the young, travelled to Milborne

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Port, it was not until twenty-six years later that the Independent Church opened a Sunday School.

During this pastorate the Scott family became connected with the church. We find that "Mrs. and Miss Scott were admitted members of y^e^ church, one on Sept. 3rd, and the other on Nov. 5th, 1769; and Mr. Russell Scott on Sept. 5th, 1779." Mrs. Scott, who appears to have been a widow, left by will, £60 to the church on May 19th, 1786, the interest to be used for the purpose of augmenting the minister's salary; but, in case the church should be for any time without a pastor, the interest was to be applied to the keeping of the meeting house in repair. By the provisions of the will, this sum of sixty pounds was to be placed out at interest, upon Government security, in the names of her children, Samuel, Mary, and Russell Scott, and Edward Hallett, who seems to have been a deacon of the church. In the first chapel, a large square pew on the left-hand side of the pulpit, was occupied by the Scott family; which pew bore on the door a brass plate inscribed with the name "*Scott.*" On the right-hand side of the pulpit a similar square pew was occupied by the Newton family (who seem to have become connected with the church at this period); this pew bore a similar brass plate, with the name "*Newton.*" These Newtons are stated to have been no relatives of

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the Rev. Francis Newton, the pastor before-named; they were, however, ancestors of the late Samuel Newton Parsons, Esq., who passed away in January, 1881, after many years connexion with the church.

It seems from a later entry in the church book, that Russell Scott afterwards became a minister at Portsmouth.

About the year 1785, three members of the church, named Pitman, Bullen, and Andrews, made donations to the church of sums amounting in the total to £88. The particulars as to the Christian names of the donors, or the amount given by each, are not specified; doubtless they desired to have no reward or praise of men, and so remained as much as possible in obscurity. This total of £88 was applied by the deacons of the church in a very wise way. British Government Funds were then very low, for unrest and strife prevailed on the Continent, and in America. Consols were in consequence much depreciated, and could be purchased at 55; that is to say, a hundred pounds' worth of Government stock could be purchased for fifty-five pounds. This being the case, the officers of the church invested in the Three Per Cent. Annuities, and stock to the amount of £160 was secured by the money.

At a later period, another donation was made

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to the church, of £92 7*s.* 6*d.*, and this also was invested in Government Stock. In 1850, the trustees of the church, acting under legal advice and direction, amalgamated the three sums, and invested them in Consols. These united sums amount to £338 2*s.* 2*d.*, and bring in annually a small but certain income of £10 2*s.* 8*d.*, which, less income-tax, is applied to the augmentation of the pastor's stipend. Since 1785, the total amount of interest received upon these different sums exceeds one thousand pounds. It will easily be seen that such an income during the past ninety-seven years has been a great boon to a struggling little church.

The Rev. Mr. Merchant was the next minister. He succeeded to the pastoral office in the latter half of 1786. In 1787, he was visited by serious illness, and many students supplied the pulpit; among them were Messrs. Cox, Gibbons, Chiddick, and William Jay, afterwards known as the celebrated pastor of Argyle Chapel, Bath.

It is recorded that Mr. Jay was only seventeen years of age at the time of his visit to Milborne Port. He was then a student at Marlborough, under the care of the Rev. Cornelius Winter, and had only just commenced to preach in public. Referring to this visit in after years, he said that this town was the first place of any consequence in which he preached.

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So juvenile was his appearance, that his entertainer, a deacon named Mr. William Newton, looked at him with surprise, fearing that "the boy preacher" would not be equal to the task of preaching three times on the Sabbath, if indeed he were competent to preach at all. But it turned out to the contrary; the people were astonished at his preaching, and hung eagerly on his words. In the church book is the following item relative to this visit: "June 17th, 1787. Paid for entertainment of Mr. Jay's horse, 6*s*. 6*d*." The student himself received nothing, for his journey of eighty miles and three sermons were looked at as part of his training for the arduous work of the ministry.

Mr. Jay did not again visit Milborne Port until after the lapse of fifty-seven years, when, after the settlement of the Rev. E. H. Perkins, the then renowned minister of Argyle, visited the town, and preached in the new chapel. Only two of those who were hearers on his first visit survived to greet him on his second; while he himself was a venerable man of seventy-four years. Of that time and service we shall have more to say in the next chapter.

On October 9th, 1788, Mr. Cracherode was set apart to the pastoral office. He continued here nearly ten years. In 1795, some repairs to the meeting house were executed, but nothing

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of much moment seems to be recorded in this ministry.

The Rev. Anthony Dixon was the next pastor. He first came to Milborne Port in July 1797, and after supplying the pulpit for four months, he was invited to become the settled minister. Mr. Dixon was ordained on November 2nd, and among those who assisted in the services of the day were Revs. Messrs. Edwards of Wilton, Moore of Tisbury, Haskett of Shaftesbury, Gray of Stalbridge, Underwood of Dorchester, Warlow of Wincanton, Cox of Horsington, Morren of Yeovil, and Herdsman of South Petherton. In the words of a modern chronicler, "Mr. Dixon was a clever man, and was much esteemed by the principal part of his congregation, but he was by no means a rousing preacher, and there was therefore very little increase to the church during his ministry."

During this ministry a house was licensed at Charlton-Horethorne as a preaching place, and supplied by village preachers from this church. The application is dated June 25th, 1800, addressed to the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, and runs thus, "May it please your Lordship, we, His Majesty's most loyal subjects, Protestant Dissenters of the Denomination of Independents, have set apart for the worship of Almighty God the dwelling-house of Thomas Sanger, situated

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in Charlton-Horethorne, in your Lordship's diocese. We humbly request your Lordship to grant a certificate for the same, and pray that it may be registered in your Lordship's Register. June 25th, 1800. A. Dixon, Thomas Sanger, Saml. Game, Saml. Longman."

The Registrar adds, "These are to certify whom it may concern, that the original certificate, of which the above is a true copy, was on the twenty-sixth day of June, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred, brought into and is now remaining in the Registry of the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells. As witness my hand."

Mr. Dixon seems to have left in 1802. Different students from the Academies of Gosport and Axminster then supplied the pulpit; and the cause greatly revived. Among these students we find the names of Cox, Hendeburck, Besly, Vickery, and Paige.

During the period of which this chapter treats, the social and religious condition of the people had greatly improved. Canals, cotton-mills, steam engines, and spinning-frames were brought into use, thus laying the foundation of much material wealth, and affording much labour. But bread was very dear, while wages were low; war had raged for many years; the press-gang was the terror of the country; the North American

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States had thrown off the English rule, and succeeded in establishing a republic, after a prolonged struggle; our National Debt had reached the sum of £860,000,000; and the operative classes were rising all over the country against famine and the introduction of machinery.

Yet, amid these dark times, there were some bright pictures. During this period, Sir Samuel Romilly, an eminent lawyer, succeeded in securing a more humane code of laws, so that the number of offences punishable by death was greatly diminished. The Sunday School system, British and Foreign Bible Society, and many of our great Missionary societies came into being about this period. George III. is reported to have said that he hoped to see the day when every poor boy in his dominions would be able to possess and read the Bible. Newspapers were established; and gas became talked about. Prison reform was thought of, and John Howard and Elizabeth Fry laboured to that end amongst criminals. Slowly but surely the light of the Gospel and the blessings of civilisation were dawning upon the community at large. The great French Revolution made the people tremble with terror. Our Indian Empire was rapidly increasing; and earnest men here and there began to take measures also for the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

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CHAPTER V.

NINETEENTH CENTURY RECORDS.

1805—1881.

Reign of George III.
„ „ George IV.
„ „ William IV.
„ „ Victoria.

ONE of these young students, named William Paige, came from Gosport, and so won the people by his evident earnestness, that he was invited to settle as the permanent pastor. This he did some time in 1805, and was ordained in the same year. By many of the older generation, his name was honoured as that of an untiring, zealous, prayerful, and humble man of God.

In the year 1806, and during this ministry, the Sunday School was established. The first teacher was a Miss Francis, sister to Mrs. Paige; while among the early teachers we find the names of King, Longman, Game, and Baker. Among the early scholars were the

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names of Chant, Welch, Barter, Ford, and Chislett. On the first Sabbath only five scholars attended the school; on the second Sabbath, ten scholars put in an appearance; while by the end of a month a sufficient number of pupils applied for admission to justify their being arranged into classes, under the care of four teachers. This was "the day of small things" for the Sabbath School; but the faith and labours of its early founders were not suffered to go unrewarded.

It appears, that from the earliest days of the school, "annual treats" were given to the scholars. These treats varied in character, according to the times. At first, the children had a hot dinner of beef and plum pudding, then buns and cider, then cakes and tea. As in those days juvenile literature was almost unknown, a penny-piece was bestowed as a monthly reward upon all who passed a creditable examination in the catechisms. These catechisms were adopted by the fathers of the church after much consideration, and were supposed to embody the historical and doctrinal truths of the Bible. They are still in use, and are learnt more or less by the present scholars. The catechisms are: Dr. Watts' "First," and "Second," and "Historical" Catechisms; "Lloyd's Scripture Catechism;" the "Shorter Catechism of the Westminster As-

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sembly of Divines" (condensed from the Presbyterian Standards of Faith); and for the senior classes, four books of "Scripture Questions" only, to which questions the pupils are expected to furnish answers from their own study of the Bible.

The chapel was also enlarged in this ministry, by the addition of side galleries. It will be remembered that in the first edifice one small gallery only was erected, and this occupied the west end of the chapel. Old adherents of the cause very well remember that small gallery, which used regularly to be occupied by the choir, the Sunday scholars, and the males of the congregation; while the women and little children sat in the pews below—only a few favoured elders sitting in the table pew. In order to trace the different enlargements, we must recall the first building. This, a small place "of twenty-eight feet square, with a roof sloping down on each of the four sides," was entered from the present front by two small doors, over each of which was a curious little round stone window of an antique pattern. Two narrow aisles led from these doors, past the pulpit, which then occupied the place of the present lobby, to the single gallery, which filled the end now devoted to the platform. This pulpit was adorned by an old-fashioned sounding-board, about five or six

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feet above the speaker's head. Bare, narrow forms were ranged by the walls at the side of the aisles, thus affording room for occasional hearers. Immediately in front of the pulpit was the "table pew," about six feet square, while on each side were the square pews known respectively as "Scott's" and "Newton's." "Two windows of a middling size," as the old church book says, filled the front wall between the two entrance doors, and two others, to match, were in the side facing the graveyard, while two smaller windows adorned the further end, one of which was over, and one under, the gallery. Beside adding to the accommodation of the chapel by the erection of side galleries, Mr. Paige had the bare forms at the sides of the aisles exchanged for a fixed bench with a back, on the north side, and a row of enclosed pews on the south side of the building.

Mr. Paige was somewhat distinguished as an author. He wrote a work on Election, entitled, "The Doctrine of Election Stated, Defended, and Improved," which was published by Westly and Davies, London, and which shows marked ability and deep acquaintance with the Sacred Word. In this volume, after stating the prevalence of the belief in Election among the Christian Churches of England, Scotland, and America, he owns that he first "felt his mind

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impressed with the truth and importance of the doctrine by reading the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England." He has also left behind him a small volume of "Memoirs," from which we gather some very interesting particulars relative to his conversion and entrance into the work of the ministry. From these "Memoirs" we make a few extracts, for the sake of those of our number who yet remember Mr. Paige and his ministerial labours at Milborne Port.

After speaking of his early impressions and endeavours after God, he goes on to say: "About seventeen or eighteen years of age, I wished to commemorate the dying love of Christ, and devote myself to the Lord, at His Table. Having no person to converse with me on this subject, I was afraid and prevented for a year or two, on account of that passage, 1. Cor. xi. 29. I constantly read and thought on the subject, and prayed to the Lord for direction and assistance. The Lord afforded me much assistance and consolation, so that my fears gradually subsided, and my desire to partake of the ordinance greatly increased, and I was enabled to commemorate the dying love of the Redeemer with much spiritual comfort and profit. In the church at Modbury, where I attended, there were several old books placed near the com-

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munion table,—placed there, I believe, by some of the Reformers. I used to go before service to read these books, and received useful instruction from them. One Sabbath morning, I entered the church a considerable time before service commenced; I went into our seat, and had no person with me for some time. There were several prayer books on the seat, but only one with the Articles of the Church of England. I took up the book, and read some of the Articles. On reading the Article on Predestination, I felt impressions so sweet, delightful, and exceedingly precious, as I cannot express; and which not only convinced me of the truth of the doctrine therein contained, but that "the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons; and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing their minds up to high and heavenly things. In this manner, the Lord was pleased to establish in my mind this great truth, as stated by the pious Reformers of the Established Church.

"When I was about twenty years of age, I was engaged in a school at Kingsbridge. Here I was favoured with many spiritual privileges and enjoyments, and heard for the first time a

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Dissenter preach, at the opening of a Baptist Chapel. There was also in the town another chapel, in Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, but the service was conducted according to the mode of the Independents. After attending for some time, I was joined with this church. After several months, my mind became calmly, sedately, and steadily fixed upon the work, and it appeared as plainly and naturally my path of duty, as to pursue any other employment, to which the Lord had called me.

"The Lord having fully satisfied my mind respecting my call to the ministry, I prepared for the journey to Bristol, which was more than one hundred miles from the place where I then resided. Trusting in the Lord, I was enabled cheerfully to leave my father's house, country, and kindred, and go where the Lord directed. I proceeded on my journey, and arrived in Bristol on Friday evening. . . . I soon gained a place as assistant in a boarding school. I then attended the ministry of Dr. Ryland, and partook of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. I was soon introduced to the doctor, and, relating to him my experience, he told me there was a vacancy in their academy, and if I were of their sentiments respecting Baptism, I might enter their academy. I informed him that I had read on the subject of Baptism, and wished to join

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the Independents. Dr. Ryland said that he was acquainted with the tutors of the Independent academies, and kindly offered to recommend me to either.

"About this time, it was intended to add ten students to Gosport Academy, to study divinity under Dr. Bogue. I received a letter with various questions, and after answering them, I was informed by Dr. Bennet that my letter had given satisfaction, and I was requested to be at Gosport at the time appointed.

"When the time of my continuance at Gosport was nearly expired, Dr. Bogue received a letter from the Rev. J. Weston of Sherborne, requesting a supply for Milborne Port, in Somerset. Dr. Bogue proposed my supplying the church during the vacation. The interest at Milborne Port was then reduced very low. I supplied it for six weeks. The Christian friends were very kind, and requested me to continue my labours for twelve months longer; with that I complied. The interest here considerably increased; I continued rather more than two years, and was ordained to the pastoral office. I was on the whole at Milborne Port eighteen years; during which time the Lord was pleased to bless my labours, so that we had in general above five or six times the number of members that there were when I came, and about three

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or four times the number of stated hearers. I also preached occasionally in a village about three miles from Milborne Port, and sometimes administered the ordinance of the Lord's Supper to a few that attended. But preaching twice at Milborne Port, and then walking three miles, and returning after night, and sometimes in severe weather, considerably impaired my health. While I was at Milborne Port, when ideas occurred to my mind respecting the doctrine of Election, I wrote them down, for the purpose of publication." This is the work referred to in the preceding pages, "On The Doctrines of Election."

Mr. Paige removed in 1823 to Burton, thence to Bristol, and thence to Weston-super-Mare, where he did much good.

Beside being an author and a preacher, Mr. Paige was a good classical scholar, and for many years kept a boarding school for young gentlemen. From this school it is stated that many pupils went forth to fill important stations in the world and the church.

During this ministry, according to Mr. E. J. Ensor's "Jubilee History of the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School," Methodism was introduced into Milborne Port. In that interesting little volume it is said: "In the year 1820, the Sunday School was begun by John Roberts, Ann

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Barrett, and Rhoda Fudge. Milborne Port first appears in the circuit records, March 28th, 1821, with sixteen persons on trial, and a contribution of 17*s*. 7*d*. to the Circuit Fund."

Yet there is proof that John Wesley and his followers had carried on their evangelistic labours in the neighbourhood long before this date. Especially was this the case at Stalbridge. The following remarkable incident is extracted from the *Christian Miscellany* of 1847. It refers to a great persecution of the early Methodists which took place at Stalbridge in the year 1762, and runs thus :—

"At the time of the great persecution in 1762 at Stalbridge, a report had been propagated for some weeks that on the 29th of May, at ten o'clock in the morning, all the Methodists in Stalbridge were to be hanged. William C——, an inveterate old persecutor, aged about seventy, a clock and watch maker, engaged to make three effigies to personate Robert Sydserf, William Drew, and Ann Ryal. Early in the morning of the above-mentioned day a large drum was beaten around the town, and multitudes from the neighbouring villages flocking in, many hundreds were soon assembled. About ten o'clock the effigies were brought forth, and after having been carried round the town, accompanied by the beating of a muffled drum, they were brought

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into the market-place to be executed. While the executioner was fixing the ropes around the necks of the effigies, the above-mentioned William C—— was leaning upon the top of his staff, apparently feasting his eyes with the transaction; and to the surprise and terror of the multitude, the instant in which the effigies were turned off, he fell to the ground, and was taken up speechless. He was carried to his house, and lived two or three days after; but he spoke no more. His own sons, who were also persecutors of the Methodists, and others who attended him, declared that before he died his countenance was horrible beyond description, and that his face resembled the visage of the effigies."

This record is all the more interesting from the fact that the Robert Sydserf mentioned above was the grandfather of Elizabeth Sydserf (afterwards Stockwell) and Mary Sydserf (afterwards Spear), who were admitted to the membership of the Milborne Port Congregational Church during the ministry of Rev. Mr. Paige, and who have only recently passed away, after witnessing a good confession of faith for many years.

The present vigorous state of Wesleyan Methodism in Milborne Port is a proof of the fact that this form of Nonconformity has taken a strong hold upon the people. The seeds sown by the early Methodist preachers

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have sprung up and borne abundant fruit, while the spiritual good accomplished by them will never be known until "the day shall declare it." Their beautiful sanctuary is hallowed by the fact that many souls have been born for glory in it.

Mr. Paige was succeeded by Mr. William Richards, of Axminster Academy, who commenced his pastoral labours at Michaelmas 1823. He was ordained in June 1825, when the Revs. Messrs. Semper of Stalbridge, Trowbridge of Cerne, Lewis of Glastonbury, Caston of Sherborne, and Jukes of Yeovil, assisted in the services.

During this ministry the chapel was lengthened by carrying back the west wall and gallery, and adding some ten or twelve feet of space. This made the length of the building some forty feet. Weekly subscriptions were commenced in 1830 for this purpose, and various amounts were collected from neighbouring churches in aid. Feeling the necessity for more accommodation, the side galleries were further enlarged by the addition of a third row of pews in the front. Mr. Richards resided here some eight years, enjoying the esteem of the people, and doing much quiet good.

Rev. Thomas Palmer next followed, commencing his ministry about the end of 1835 or the

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commencement of 1836. He does not seem to have accomplished much during his connection with the church, and resigned his office at the end of 1838.

He was succeeded by the Rev. Ebenezer Smith, of Lyme, who accepted the invitation of the church, and commenced his work in January 1839. We find that while at Milborne Port his views concerning Nonconformity underwent a change, and he resigned chiefly on that ground. An entry in the church book thus reads,—"On the 7th day of November, 1841, the Rev. Mr. Smith preached his farewell sermon, and finished his ministerial course in connection with the Independent Denomination of Dissenters at Milborne Port." After leaving this place he became a candidate for holy orders, and ultimately was licensed to a curacy in the Church of England.

We now come to the ministry of the Rev. E. H. Perkins, who is lovingly remembered by many who were members of his church and congregation. He was educated, first at Newport Pagnell and then at Glasgow University. In May 1842, he first supplied the pulpit as a student, for several Sabbaths, with much acceptance. Upon receiving a cordial invitation, he became the pastor of the church at Michaelmas 1842. Very soon after his becoming pastor, a

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project was set on foot for rebuilding and enlarging the old chapel. Accordingly it was (with the exception of part of the north wall,) pulled down and rebuilt from the foundation, while some nine feet were added to the length, making it in the inside 49 feet in length. The former inside *width* of 28 feet was still preserved. The alterations and improvements inside the building were still more noticeable. The old sounding-board was removed, and the pulpit carried to the other end, while a larger gallery, with entrance lobby and two flights of gallery-stairs, took the place of the former pulpit. A third window was added to those in the south side, and two windows placed in both the east and west walls to match. The ground-floor of the building was filled with smaller and more modern pews, in place of the former high-backed ones, while the antiquated "square pews" were abolished, and the table pew transferred to the front of the pulpit. The side-galleries were lengthened to correspond with the added space, and the rows of seats reduced to two, as in their original state, while the new east-end gallery was rendered commodious enough to accommodate nearly all the Sunday School children and the choir. The whole was painted of a light but sober drab.

At the reopening of this second sanctuary, which took place on October 1st, 1844, Mr.

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Perkins was ordained. The Revs. William Jay of Bath, Elliot of Devizes, Caines of Blandford, Evans of Shaftesbury, Skinner of Bruton, and other neighbouring ministers, took part in the services of that deeply interesting time.

From an interesting MS. account of the services of that time, the writer extracts the following "Concluding Address of the Rev. William Jay, at the opening of the New Chapel at Milborne Port, Tuesday, October 1st, 1844.' It will be interesting to the present generation as being the utterance of a man who was deeply revered and much beloved. The text was, "Out of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace."

After delivering a characteristic discourse, he closed the Bible, and uttered the following exhortation:—"The service is now ended, and the speaker will not detain you much longer. Indeed, having been poorly of late, I have found the service enough for my strength, and perhaps you have found it too much for your patience. It may seem descending from such a subject to notice silver and gold; and yet when Paul had finished the finest chapter in the Bible, and had said, 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,' he

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instantly adds, 'And now concerning the collection.' Well, and we say the same this evening. You know that a collection is to be made on this occasion, and if you did not intend to encourage it, you should have kept out of harm's way. You know also, I presume, what it is intended for. It is towards defraying the expenses arising from enlarging, and indeed *rebuilding*, this sanctuary. This was rendered necessary by the building getting into a dilapidated state, and by being too contracted to afford accommodation to those who desired to occupy places here; and when a disposition for hearing had been discerned in any neighbourhood, woe be to that church and that congregation which will not afford that accommodation at any expense! For supposing it should occasion the expenditure of one thousand pounds, what is that to the salvation of one soul? 'For there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' These things you know cannot be accomplished without considerable cost; and you know our places of worship are not repaired or rebuilt by Parliamentary grant or parochial assessment. Amongst us, everything is free: freely we have received, freely we give. Upwards of £300 will be required to pay all the expenses arising from this rebuilding. About £200 have been raised, of which a considerable portion has been given here; and I never love to

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plead for people, and recommend their case to others, unless they have done nobly themselves. But when this has been the case, and they have wrought willingly, according to their ability, why then, the many can help the few. What have you been praying for, these many years in public, in your families, and alone, but that the word of the Lord may have free course,—that His kingdom may come, and His will be done on earth as in heaven? And when you offered those petitions, did you suppose they were going to be answered by miracles or by means? And if by means, why should you think you were not to be engaged as instruments?

"Do not say, 'Why, we seem to be always giving!' This is not true. You are not always giving, but you *are* always receiving. And you know that you are placed here to be useful. You know that of all the property you possess you are stewards, and not proprietors. You know that with such sacrifices God is well pleased; and you know something more congenial with our subject, 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.' It is not far from sixty years since that I preached in the former meeting house here. Then these hairs were as black as a raven:—

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"Many years have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen;
But have been upheld till now,
Who hath kept me, Lord, but thou?"

What is become of the many who heard the youth then? They are gone the way of all the earth; and we, too, are following. How many of our opportunities are irrecoverably gone! How much more we might have done in glorifying our Saviour, and in serving our generation according to His will! We know not how few remain in future, but let us be concerned to improve them. What! could you sleep in the garden when your Saviour is agonising hard by? Oh! for the spirit of Him who said, 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is yet day; the night cometh when no man can work.' Amen." Thus ended a service long remembered by those who attended it.

For an interval of about six months, Mr. Perkins preached at Wincanton, having resigned his office at Milborne Port at Michaelmas, 1846; but in the following May he resumed his ministry among the people, at their earnest request. He then took charge of the female Bible Class, until he consented to minister to the Henstridge Church each Sabbath afternoon.

In 1850, a schoolroom was erected on part of the graveyard adjoining the chapel. The church

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records state that "Sir W. C. Medlycott, Bart., granted the favour of taking part of the garden behind the graveyard, so as to build the school-room parallel with the other buildings." It is also recorded that, in 1842, the same baronet "kindly contributed materials toward building the new chapel."

The period of this ministry was very fruitful in good. Among the results of Mr. Perkins' labours was the foundation of a church in the neighbouring village of Stourton Caundle, as an auxiliary, or branch, of that at Milborne Port. A pretty little chapel was erected and opened in 1856, almost solely in consequence of Mr. Perkins' exertions; and in this sanctuary, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and members of other Churches met in communion from time to time, in perfect unity and Christian love. This church is still in existence, and is now ministered to by evangelists from the Dorset Congregational County Association.

For a long period, Mr. Perkins was also pastor of the Henstridge Congregational Church, and preached regularly there each Sabbath afternoon. During this period, from January 1851, to March 1858, he provided the supplies for the morning of the Lord's Day, and, in addition, preached one evening each week.

Several village stations were opened, and

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maintained with more or less efficiency during this pastorate. Among them may be mentioned Stourton Caundle, Purse Caundle (which was a station *before* this period), Stowell, Marston, Haydon, Milborne Wick, and occasionally Poyntington. As the consequence of this minister's indefatigable exertions, a strong band of village preachers and prayer-leaders sustained and aided these works.

Mr. Perkins also started the Loan Tract Society, commencing house-to-house visitation by means of tract distributors. This means of usefulness is still in existence, and by it about twelve thousand tracts are exchanged each year, in the town and neighbouring hamlets. A British School was also opened and sustained for some years, in great part by voluntary subscriptions. In 1865, a new organ was erected, at a cost of £130. Various testimonials were presented to Mr. Perkins, all of which testified to the loving esteem in which he was held by the people of his charge. The church book records that, on September 15th, 1851, "The Rev. E. H. Perkins had presented to him a purse of gold, £23, in the Independent Chapel, as a token of respect for his liberality and valuable services in the erection of a school-room." An earlier presentation took place in 1847, when eight volumes of William Jay's works, and six of Robert Hall's, were given to

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him by the church. At another time the young men of the congregation presented him with a valuable inkstand; shortly after, there was given him a large pulpit Bible, from the Female Bible Class. At the conclusion of his ministry, a valuable gold watch, and silver salver, together with some books, were purchased by the united subscriptions of the church and congregation, and presented on behalf of people by the deacons. The following form of address was affixed to the volumes, by way of explanation :—

Presented to the

REV. E. H. PERKINS,

BY HIS CONGREGATION, THE VICAR, AND OTHER FRIENDS, AS A MARK OF ESTEEM, ON HIS RESIGNING THE PASTORATE OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, MILBORNE PORT, SOMERSET, AFTER A MINISTRY OF MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY.

October, 1868.

During Mr. Perkins' pastorate, four young men left the church to engage in the work of preaching the Gospel either at home or abroad. They are—Rev. Thomas Blandford, of Herne Bay; Rev. Frederick Pitman, of Victoria, Australia; Rev. Edwin Lewis, of Bellary, India; and Rev. Frederick Longman, of Heytesbury. All these are at present engaged successfully and devotedly in the work. During their time of

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training they all ministered occasionally in the pulpit of their early home.

After twenty-six years of constant service, Mr. Perkins resigned the pastorate. He had previously left the town upon the ground of health, and resided at Stalbridge, coming to and fro in the exercise of his pastoral labours. Shortly after he received a call to Charmouth, and from thence to Axminster, where he still resides, occupying the position of minister of the Congregational Church there. The entry in the church book runs thus—"May 1868. At the church meeting for May, the Rev. E. H. Perkins resigned the pastoral charge, after a ministry of twenty-six years; and preached his last sermons on the third Sunday, being the same day of the month as he preached his first sermons in1842."

Another entry records—"He was a truly amiable, devoted, and consistent minister of Jesus Christ." His constant kindness, sympathy, and liberality to the afflicted members of his flock, from the very commencement of his ministry, are now remembered by very many.

The Rev. G. W. Brownjohn, from Hingham, Norfolk, succeeded to the pastorate, in September, 1868. The following entries in the church book relate to his call:—"October, 1868. At the church meeting for October, the Rev. G. W. Brownjohn, who had supplied the pulpit for

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three Sundays, was invited to take the pastorate of the church for a twelvemonth, which he accepted, and commenced his ministry on the first Sunday in November. And at a special church meeting held July 23rd, 1869, he was invited to become the settled pastor of the church; which invitation he accepted."

Early in this ministry, the form of contribution known as the "Weekly Offering," was adopted, whereby the means for the support of the pastor and defraying the incidental expenses in connection with divine worship are supplied from the "weekly" offerings of the subscribers, "according as God hath prospered them." By this plan, no fixed charge is made *per sitting*, but each attendant at divine service contributes a sum proportioned to his or her ability and income. This system was considered at a special meeting of the church and subscribers, held in December, 1868, when the Rev. Samuel Hebditch (then of Bristol, now of Clapton Park, London) attended to advocate the principles and practice of this new mode of giving. As the result, it was resolved by the church and congregation to adopt the new system on the first Sabbath in 1869. The adoption of this plan immediately led to a large increase in the income, the subscriptions rising from £93 7*s*. 9½*d*. in 1868, to £107 17*s*. 6½*d*. in 1869.

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The period of Mr. Brownjohn's ministry was characterised by much quiet seed-sowing; some of which seed has sprung up since, and borne fruit. He paid much attention to the psalmody of the church, and as the result, it is very largely improved. The old-fashioned drawling style of singing is superseded by one which is more musical and cultured. A harmonium was generously presented, by Miss Young, for use in the Bible Classes, week evening services, and in choir practice. Mr. Brownjohn was much esteemed as a man of prayer; his utterances and petitions, whether public or private, were very fervent, heartfelt, and appropriate.

During this pastorate, special classes for young people were held; and a plan introduced for gathering the children early into the church. The Sunday School Anniversaries became popular and flourishing: while the custom was introduced of holding an annual out-door *fête* for the scholars, instead of giving them cake and tea, on Easter Monday, before the public tea. Mr. Brownjohn also rendered much service in the cause of education, by acting as secretary to the committee of the British School for many years.

A Bible Class for young men, on the Sabbath afternoons, was also started by Mr. Brownjohn. A similar class had existed in a flourishing state

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in the preceding ministry for some years, having been then conducted by the late Mr. Joseph Raymond; but from various causes it had ceased to be held. Mr. Brownjohn, however, revived it, and after placing it on a sound footing, handed it over to Mr. George Vallance, who led it till his departure for the Scilly Isles. Mr. John Maidment then succeeded him as leader.

Mr. Brownjohn evinced constant and earnest interest in the affairs of the Sunday School, the missionary exertions of the church, and the work of the Loan Tract Society. As a visitor of the sick, he was faithful, tender, and prayerful; and his ministrations were welcomed by members of all the churches in the town. After Mr. Vallance's departure for the Scilly Isles, the Loan Tract Society supplied one of the islands in that group with its old tracts, greatly to the benefit of the islanders.

On more than one occasion his friends and hearers practically exemplified their esteem by presenting him with testimonials. In January 1873, partly by the liberality of the church, and partly by the gift of Mr. Somerville of Bristol, he was made a life member of the Pastor's Retiring Fund. At another time a present was given him from his people, as a "Christmas Box;" and a purse of gold on the occasion of his leaving, together with an illuminated address.

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During both this, and the preceding pastorate, gracious seasons of revival were experienced, when numbers of members were added to the Church.

His ministry closed in April 1881, after a period of twelve and a half years, when he removed to Witney, Oxfordshire, in response to a call from the Congregational Church there.

During the period embraced in this chapter, the condition of the English people had vastly improved. It is only necessary to name a few of the leading events, to remind the reader of the giant strides which this country had made towards liberty and civilization. In 1812, the first steam-boat in Europe was launched; and in 1825, the first railway between Stockton and Darlington was opened. In 1832, the Reform Bill was passed; in 1834, slavery was abolished in our West Indian possessions, and the new Poor Laws were passed. Mechanics Institutes were established; cheap printing began to be enjoyed, and a popular literature created; while good day-schools for the children of the working classes sprung up on every hand. These voluntary schools are now being superseded by Board schools, sustained by the rates. The Disruption occurred in the Church of Scotland in 1843, when a large number of clergymen and congregations separated from the State Church, and formed themselves into the Free

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Church. In 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed, and Free Trade triumphed. Thenceforth the corn of foreign countries came into our ports nearly free, and the working classes could rejoice in a cheap loaf. An era of revived industry brought a demand for Exhibitions, and the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park was the forerunner of many others. In 1854, war was proclaimed with Russia; and the soil of the Crimea was reddened with the blood of many of our brave soldiers, ere Sebastopol fell into English hands, and the enemy sued for peace. In 1857, the terrible Indian Mutiny broke out, and English rule in India was only re-established after a terrible struggle with Mohammedan bigotry and cruelty. In 1862-5, civil war raged in the United States, which led, to the proclamation of freedom for every one of the four millions of slaves upon the soil of that great republic. From that date, England and America could rejoice equally in the fact that negro slavery had become a thing of the past, for each country. And during this period, the great principles of civil and religious liberty have won increasing triumphs. Nonconformity has been freed from many of its old disabilities and deprivations, while peace, righteousness, and justice have become the ruling principle of statesmen, to a very large extent.

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CHAPTER VI.

PRESENT DAY NOTES.

1882.

IN January of this year, Rev. Edwin Dawe, late from the State of Michigan, United States succeeded to the pastorate. Immediately afterwards, projects for the renovation of the chapel were set on foot by him, and are now being carried out. These renovations include a new platform, handsomely furnished, in place of the old pulpit, three gas stars to light the building, re-pewing the ground floor, a new floor, lobby, and doors, with painting and colouring, and will be accomplished at a total cost of nearly £300. Toward this sum, the people will obtain by the end of the current year £160, from one source and another, beside raising about £140 for the expenses of maintaining the ministry, and necessary incidental charges. The different benevolent subscriptions of the church, for Missionary, Sunday School, and charitable purposes, amount to nearly £30 more. All these sums will have been raised

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exclusive of endowment, and rents, so that this little church, if small and poor, is not deficient in faith, nor wanting in good works. Indeed, both the past and present history of the cause affords much room for honourable pride, and devout thankfulness. The church has passed through many vicissitudes since its foundation, but still lives, and its heart beats true to the principles of Gospel life and liberty. We hope that a season of revival and power yet lies before it.

The renovations at present in progress are mainly due to the instrumentality of Mr. Dawe. He is a powerful preacher, and has succeeded in stirring up the people. Signs of revived interest are apparent, and a spirit of hearing is plainly discernible. We devoutly trust that bright and prosperous days are yet in store for us, as a church and people; and that above all, the prosperity may be of a spiritual and an abiding nature.

The church's past history furnishes facts honourable both to itself and its members. From this little body, six ministers of the Gospel have gone forth, at different times, to labour either in the home or foreign field. They are—

(1) Rev. Russell Scott, who entered the church in 1779, and is recorded in the church book, "Minister at Portsmouth" in 1795.

(2) Rev. Uriah Coombs, who formerly belonged

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to the Sunday School. He was for a time connected with the Wesleyan body, but re-joined the Congregationalists. On going to Australia, he was trained at Victoria College, and became pastor of a church in Victoria, in 1865.

(3) Rev. Thomas Blandford. He was from youth a member of this church, passed from it to be trained at Cotton End College, and commenced his ministry at Oakham, Rutland, in 1850. Now resident at Herne Bay. For some years he was Chairman of the Kent Association of Congregational Ministers.

(4) Rev. Frederick J. Pitman, formerly a member of this church. He was trained at Western College, Plymouth, sailed for Australia on account of health, and commenced his ministry there in 1858. Is now pastor of the church at Yarrawonga, Victoria, Australia.

(5) Rev. Edwin Lewis, also a former member of this church. He was trained at Hackney College, ordained at Milborne Port, in 1865, and sent out by the London Missionary Society to Bellary, South India. Mrs. Lewis, his wife, formerly a member of Sherborne Congregational Church, has rendered good service in the work of native female education in Bellary.

(6) Rev. Frederick Longman. He was for some years in membership with this church, and left it to occupy the position of an evangelist at

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Moreton Hampstead, Devon, in 1862. After some years of evangelistic service, he entered the regular ministry, and is now pastor at Heytesbury, Wiltshire.

Besides these, many trained in the church are filling honourable positions in business, in scholastic, and in religious life, in various parts of the world. On looking back over the annals of the church, we find many names of persons who were prominent and honoured in her service. Among these are the names of Arnold, Newton, Hallett, Paine, Pitman, Granger, Scott, Parsons, Bullen, Andrews, Raymond, Game, King, Axtens, Longman, Wilcox, Brett, and Grimes. Some of their descendants are still to be found in her communion, while others have moved to different Churches in England, the Colonies, and America.

The following letters will be read with interest. They are from old friends, and former pastors of the Church :—

From Rev. F. Beckley, formerly minister of Sherborne, now of Bath.

"BATH, *Oct.* 17, 1882.

"DEAR MRS. PITMAN,

"I am glad to find your prolific pen is engaged in writing 'Memorials of the Congregational Church at Milborne Port.' As your

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life has been spent in connection with it, and all recorded information, as well as unwritten facts, will doubtless be available for your aid, I have no doubt you will send forth a little volume that will prove of great interest and value to many beyond the circle acquainted with the locality.

"Living as I did, for more than twenty years within three miles of Milborne Port, and acquainted as I was with many of the inhabitants, my impression is, that, population considered, there is a larger proportion of attendance at the house of God, and at least external respect paid to the ordinances of religion, of any place I ever knew; while the catholicity of spirit prevailing in the whole community seemed remarkable.

"From 1856, till 1877, I was frequently brought into communication, and occasional services with your church; and in changes that took place, sometimes consulted. With the pastors, through that period, it was my pleasure to be on terms of cordial relation. Through so long a period, like all human societies, you had fluctuations; but I never think of the church at Milborne Port without pleasure. Many, 'precious in the sight of the Lord' have been among her members. She has, of her sons, sent at least one eminently successful missionary to the heathen, and several other honoured and esteemed ministers into the field at home; while

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many, as teachers in the school and preachers in surrounding districts, have rendered great service to the cause of Christ; and I have no doubt you have many such still. Of the female members, I can only say, I have known among you some of the best of women, whose memories I must ever cherish with pleasure; and trust the esteemed authoress of this little work may long be spared, not only to bless her own circle, but to edify and delight multitudes by her works. I would just add, you have had as private members of your church some remarkable persons. I shall never forget addresses I have heard from one who has now passed away. They amazed me; they would have been listened to with delight by the most intelligent audience. Among the joys I contemplate above, is reunion with many such. Wishing you much success, and trusting that 'times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,'

"Believe me, Yours sincerely,

"F. BECKLEY."

From Rev. E. H. Perkins, now minister at Axminster.

"AXMINSTER, *Oct.* 18, 1882.

"DEAR MRS PITMAN,

"Certainly my going to Milborne Port was very remarkable, as our late friend, Mr. Thomas

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Spear, well knew, and my ministry was most graciously owned and blessed by God. My labours, too, were 'abundant' in the town and neighbourhood, as is well remembered by some. I can truly say I am grateful to God I was ever the pastor of the church; and that I think it is a great honour to have been connected with a church from which it pleased God to call four young men to the ministry of the Gospel. It may be too strong an expression, but an elderly minister, who knew the county well, said that it was 'the most prosperous church in the county,' at the time he spoke. I left Milborne Port partly because I had been overworking, but chiefly on account of Mrs. Perkins' health, and went to reside at Stalbridge, thinking it probable that, with the assistance of a young minister, I could continue the pastorate; but in the course of a few months I found that it would be wiser and better to resign. That I accordingly did, and after some months' rest, I went to Charmouth, where I had a smaller church and the benefit of sea air. I am very pleased to hear that you are writing the 'Memorials' of the church.

"I remain,

"Yours very truly,

"E. H. PERKINS.'

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From the Rev. G. W. Brownjohn, minister at Witney.

"WITNEY, *Oxon, Oct.* 19, 1882.

"DEAR MRS. PITMAN,

"I shall be very happy to conform to your desire by contributing a few lines towards carrying out your design in 'Memorials of the Congregational Church.'

"In thinking of my pastorate of over twelve years at Milborne Port, I come across very much that is pleasant to remember. During even that short time, many changes took place in what I love to think of as my old flock. Several of the old people passed away to the one great fold; many others, especially of the young people, were scattered hither and thither upon God's earth, either continuing Christian work elsewhere, or carrying with them wholesome and happy memories of chapel, school, choir, or singing-class, as well as of home, which developed into life which was consecrated to God. My old flock was very much what a Christian church on the earth may be expected to be. There were elements which caused great anxiety, and, indeed, sorrow of heart; but these were comparatively few, while the indications of real Christian spirit and life were many, and the readiness to work

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for Christ more manifest than in other churches. Just a few restless spirits,—but only a few,—prevented us from dreaming we were in heaven; but the many patient and earnest souls who loved the truth, wrought righteousness, sought to make the world better, and honoured God, preserved the happy consciousness that as church and pastor we were on the road to heaven, where all alike would at length be complete in Christ.

"Concerning the attitude of my old flock toward myself, there were many special instances of kindly regard which are pleasant to remember. Some of these were united efforts to minister to me in times of sickness; the more numerous were the loving efforts of individuals to contribute to the earthly necessities of myself and my family. The humblest of these was that of a very poor old woman, who, year by year, until she was taken to heaven, trudged all the way to my cottage with a peck of potatoes, as 'an offering of the first-fruits of her ground to the Lord's minister.' Another good friend, careful not to let the left hand know what the right hand did, at different times enclosed pieces of gold to me, which always came at a time when they were greatly needed, although I knew not whence they came. There were many others between these; yet I have the impression that the poor old lady's annual peck of potatoes will be found to

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stand equal in importance to any gift I received. These special instances of kindly regard, as well as the general kindness shown to me, are precious to me still; but the exhibition on the part of one and another of deep spiritual sympathy, which cheered and sustained me in my work, was most precious to me then, and over it I can never cease to rejoice. Disposed to judge my own work severely, so that I felt great depression in consequence, the evidence of God's working among my people, the exhibition of Christian spirit in one, thoughtful regard for eternal truth and divine things shown by another, or the decision of yet another for Christ, was gratefully acknowledged to Him for whom I laboured.

"Although removed from my old flock, there is a bond between them and me which never can be broken; and as I laboured among them because I loved them, so I still pray that every one of them may be presented perfect before God; and that meanwhile, and ever onward, the church which God has so long maintained there, may grow in numbers, and especially in the spirit and power of Christ.

"Yours faithfully,

"G. W. BROWNJOHN."

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From Rev. J. E. Drover, minister at Wincanton.

"WINCANTON, *Oct. 24th*, 1882.

"MY DEAR MRS. PITMAN,

"In preparing for the press 'Memorials of the Congregational Church' at Milborne Port, you are doing what I heard one of our Somerset ministers say he should like to be done in connection with all our churches in the county. Yours is indeed a labour of love, and most sincerely do I hope that you may realise great success in assisting the funds of the church.

"I have known Milborne Port for more than thirty years. Many, connected with the Congregational church, I have frequently met, and enjoyed such seasons of social and Christian intercourse as will never be forgotten. The majority have passed away to 'the better land;' but few of those I first knew remain to this day. I paid my first visit to Milborne Port on the last Sunday in October, 1847, having then but recently come to Wincanton. My friend, the Rev. E. H. Perkins, the then pastor of Milborne Port, preached in my pulpit on the same day. It was a day to be remembered, though so many years have passed away. I was exceedingly struck with the numbers attending the chapel, and with the devout and serious attention of the hearers. I could not but per-

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ceive that there was love for the house of God and pleasure in His service, and that the Divine Presence was realized.

"Through subsequent intercourse with the church, and their minister, and a few more visits on the Sabbaths during the following year, I became more fully acquainted with their condition. That in so small a town there should be so large a church and congregation, so vigorous a Sabbath School, and so many earnest village preachers, and all in such good working order, seemed surprising. But there was one thing that would account for it, and that was the prevalence of the spirit of prayer. It was evidently *a praying church*. At the close of the Sabbath evening service, nearly the whole congregation would remain, as a matter of course, for prayer. Such seasons I have much enjoyed when there. A minister long since passed away told me, when he preached at Milborne Port 'he always enjoyed himself, and was greatly helped in his work, for he felt he was borne up by the prayers of the people.' During more than thirty years, many changes have taken place,—changes in the ministry and in the diaconate: in the former, two to occupy other spheres of labour; and in the latter, several to exchange earth for heaven.

"Still the church and congregation have been

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preserved, and greatly increased from the ranks of the young; they have kept together, have remained united and loving, and are, we trust, now more than ever determined that 'times of refreshing' shall be enjoyed by them 'from the presence of the Lord;' that, whilst the former days were bright and prosperous, these latter days, by God's blessing, shall be still more so; and that, 'instead of the fathers, shall come up the children,' who shall be valiant for the truth as it is in Christ Jesus to the end of their days.

"Believe me, Yours very truly,

"J. E. DROVER."

The subjoined is a list of deacons who have served the church in that capacity since its formation, in 1744, into an Independent or Congregational church. This list is most likely incomplete, because the records were, during some periods, kept irregularly, and are in some years, missing. While the cause was recognised as belonging to the Presbyterian order, it would have no need of deacons, being then governed by the Presbytery, and ultimately by the Synod and General Assembly. This accounts for the fact, that, previous to 1744, no deacons were elected.

Where the dates of election cannot be obtained, the earliest dates at which these officers respectively served the office are given.

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1749. Goddard Hallett.
1749. William Granger.
1785. Simon Paine.
1789. William Newton.
1789. Thomas Arnold.
1789. Edward Hallett.
1806. Samuel Game, Senr.
1806. William King, Senr.
1825. William King, Junr.
1828. James Parsons.
1828. George Pitman.
1830. Joseph Pitman.
1830. Thomas Spear.
1844. Charles Foot.
1852. Reuben Raymond.
1855. Samuel Newton Parsons.
1869. John Maidment.
1874. George Vallance.
1874. Edwin Pitman.

One of the above, Mr. Samuel Newton Parsons, gave, in 1878, an antique silver cup, to be used in the communion service of the church. Some years previously, the flagon now in use had been presented by Mrs. Brine, of Temple-Combe; when some cups were purchased by the united subscriptions of the members. Number of church members, at this date, is about 110.

The building was licensed for the solemnization of marriages in 1837, under the Dissenters' Marriage Act. A fee of £3 was paid for the license.

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The present officers are :—

Rev. Edwin Dawe, Pastor.
Mr. Reuben Raymond,
„ John Maidment,
„ Edwin Pitman,
} Deacons.

This chronicle would not be complete without some notice of the Sunday School. It has become diminished somewhat, in consequence of depressed trade, during the past five years, and consequent departures from the town.

The school at present includes 187 scholars of all ages. The teaching staff is as follows :—

Mr. Edwin Pitman, *Superintendent.*
„ James Weare, *Secretary.*
„ John Maidment, *Young Men's Bible Class.*
Mrs. Edwin (E. R.) Pitman, *Young Women's Bible Class.*
Mr. George Pitman.
„ Alfred Curtis.
„ Samuel Cook.
„ Robert Clarke.
„ Harry A. Vickers.
„ Frank D. Raymond.
Miss Jane Raymond.
Mrs. William Wimbridge.
Miss Annie Blandford.
„ Sophia Derriman.
„ Annie Sutton.
„ Minnie Raymond.
„ Emily Lewis.
„ Nellie Pitman.
„ Priscilla Hanns.
Mrs. James Weare (*substitute*).

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With reference to the future, this little chronicle may fitly close with the prayer of the apostle Paul for the Ephesian church:—"That He would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Finis.

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APPENDIX.

DECLARATION

OF THE

FAITH, CHURCH ORDER, & DISCIPLINE

OF THE

Congregational, or Independent Dissenters.

Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Congregational Union, May 1833.

The CONGREGATIONAL Churches in England and Wales, frequently called INDEPENDENT, hold the following doctrines, as of Divine authority, and as the foundation of Christian faith and practice. They are also formed and governed according to the principles hereinafter stated.

PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament, as received by the Jews, and the Books of the New

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Testament, as received by the Primitive Christians from the Evangelists and Apostles, Congregational Churches believe to be Divinely inspired and of supreme authority. These writings, in the languages in which they were originally composed, are to be consulted, with the aids of sound criticism, as a final appeal to all controversies; but the common version they consider to be adequate to the ordinary purposes of Christian instruction and edification.

II. They believe in one God, essentially wise, holy, just, and good; eternal, infinite, and immutable in all natural and moral perfections; the Creator, Supporter, and Governor of all beings and of all things.

III. They believe that God is revealed in the Scriptures as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that to each are attributable the same Divine properties and perfections. The doctrine of the Divine existence, as above stated, they cordially believe, without attempting fully to explain.

IV. They believe that man was created after the Divine image, sinless, and in his kind, perfect.

V. They believe that the first man disobeyed the Divine command, fell from his state of innocence and purity, and involved all his posterity in the consequences of that fall.

VI. They believe that, therefore, all mankind

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are born in sin, and that a fatal inclination to moral evil, utterly incurable by human means, is inherent in every descendant of Adam.

VII. They believe that God having, before the foundation of the world, designed to redeem fallen man, made disclosures of His mercy, which were the grounds of faith and hope from the earliest ages.

VIII. They believe that God revealed more fully to Abraham the covenant of His grace, and, having promised that from His descendants should arise the Deliverer and Redeemer of mankind, set that patriarch and his posterity apart, as a race specially favoured and separated to His service; a peculiar Church, formed and carefully preserved under the Divine sanction and government until the birth of the promised Messiah.

IX. They believe that, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, being born of the Virgin Mary, but conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit; and that our Lord Jesus Christ was both the Son of man and the Son of God, partaking fully and truly of human nature though without sin; equal with the Father and "the express image of His Person."

X. They believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, revealed, either personally in His own ministry, or by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of His apostles, the whole mind of God for our

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salvation; and that, by His obedience to the Divine law while He lived, and by His sufferings unto death, He meritoriously "obtained eternal redemption for us;" having thereby vindicated and illustrated Divine justice, "magnified the law," and "brought in everlasting righteousness."

XI. They believe that, after His death and resurrection, He ascended up into Heaven, where, as the Mediator, He "ever liveth" to rule over all, and to "made intercession for them that come unto God by Him."

XII. They believe that the Holy Spirit is given, in consequence of Christ's mediation, to quicken and renew the hearts of men; and that His influence is indispensably necessary to bring a sinner to true repentance, to produce saving faith, to regenerate the heart, and to perfect our sanctification.

XIII. They believe that we are justified through faith in Christ, as "the Lord our righteousness," and not "by the works of the law."

XIV. They believe that all who will be saved were the objects of God's eternal and electing love, and were given by an act of Divine sovereignty to the Son of God, which in no way interferes with the system of means, nor with the grounds of human responsibility; being wholly

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unrevealed as to its objects, and not a rule of human duty.

XV. They believe that the Scriptures teach the final perseverance of all true believers to a state of eternal blessedness, which they are appointed to obtain through constant faith in Christ and uniform obedience to His commands.

XVI. They believe that a holy life will be the necessary effect of a true faith, and that good works are the certain fruits of a vital union to Christ.

XVII. They believe that the sanctification of true Christians, or their growth in the graces of the Spirit, and meetness for heaven, is gradually carried on through the whole period during which it pleases God to continue them in the present life; and that, at death, their souls, perfectly freed from all remains of evil, are immediately received into the presence of Christ.

XVIII. They believe in the perpetual obligation of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the former to be administered to all converts to Christianity and their children, by the application of water to the subject, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and the latter to be celebrated by Christian Churches as a token of faith in the Saviour, and of brotherly love.

XIX. They believe that Christ will finally

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come to judge the whole human race according to their works; that the bodies of the dead will be raised again; and that, as the Supreme Judge, He will divide the righteous from the wicked, will receive the righteous into "life everlasting," but send away the wicked into "everlasting punishment."

XX. They believe that Jesus Christ directed His followers to live together in Christian fellowship, and to maintain the communion of Saints; and that, for this purpose, they are jointly to observe all divine ordinances, and maintain that Church order and discipline which is either expressly enjoined by inspired institution, or sanctioned by the undoubted example of the apostles and of apostolic Churches.

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH ORDER AND DISCIPLINE.

I. The Congregational churches hold it to be the will of Christ that true believers should voluntarily assemble together to observe religious ordinances, to promote mutual edification and holiness, to perpetuate and propagate the Gospel in the world, and to advance the glory and worship of God through Jesus Christ; and that each society of believers, having these objects in view in its formation, is properly a Christian Church.

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II. They believe that the New Testament contains, either in the form of express statute, or in the example and practice of apostles and apostolic churches, all the articles of faith necessary to be believed, and all the principles of order and discipline requisite for constituting and governing Christian societies; and that human traditions, fathers, and councils, canons and creeds, possess no authority over the faith and practice of Christians.

III. They acknowledge Christ as the only Head of the Church, and the officers of each church under Him as ordained to administer His laws impartially to all; and their only appeal, in all questions touching their religious faith and practice, is to the Sacred Scriptures.

IV. They believe that the New Testament authorizes every Christian church to elect its own officers, to manage all its own affairs, and to stand independent of, and irresponsible to, all authority, saving that only of the Supreme and Divine Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. They believe that the only officers placed by the apostles over individual churches are the bishops or pastors, and the deacons; the number of these being dependent upon the number of the church; and that to these, as the officers of the church, is committed respectively the administration of its spiritual and temporal

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concerns; subject, however, to the approbation of the church.

VI. They believe that no person should be received as members of Christian churches but such as make a credible profession of Christianity, are living according to its precepts, and attest a willingness to be subject to its discipline; and that none should be excluded from the fellowship of the church but such as deny the faith of Christ, violate His laws, or refuse to submit themselves to the discipline which the Word of God enforces.

VII. The power of admission into any Christian church, and rejection from it, they believe to be vested in the church itself, and to be exercised only through the medium of its own officers.

VIII. They believe that Christian churches should statedly meet for the celebration of public worship, for the observance of the Lord's Supper, and for the sanctification of the first day of the week.

IX. They believe that the power of a Christian church is purely spiritual, and should in no way be corrupted by union with temporal or civil power.

X. They believe that it is the duty of Christian churches to hold communion with each other, to entertain an enlarged affection for each other, as members of the same body, and to co-operate

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for the promotion of the Christian cause; but that no church, or union of churches, has any right or power to interfere with the faith or discipline of any other church, further than to separate from such as in faith or practice depart from the Gospel of Christ.

XI. They believe that it is the privilege and duty of every church to call forth such of its members as may appear to be qualified by the Holy Spirit to sustain the office of the ministry; and that Christian churches unitedly ought to consider the maintenance of the Christian ministry in an adequate degree of learning, as one of their especial cares, that the cause of the Gospel may be both honourably sustained and constantly promoted.

XII. They believe that church officers, whether bishops, or deacons, should be chosen by the free voice of the church; but that their dedication to the duties of their office should take place with special prayer and by solemn designation, to which most of the churches add the imposition of hands by those already in office.

XIII. They believe that the fellowship of every Christian church should be so liberal as to admit to communion in the Lord's Supper all whose faith and godliness are, on the whole, undoubted, though conscientiously differing in points of minor importance; and that this out-

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ward sign of fraternity in Christ should be co-extensive with the fraternity itself, though without involving any compliances which conscience would deem to be sinful.

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